

Gunnison Hinsdale Early Childhood Council
Community Assessment and Strategic Plan
January 2009

*Our **mission** is to expand and improve quality early childhood services and education opportunities for families in Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties*

*Our **vision** is to ensure the healthy growth and optimal development of all young children so that each child is ready to succeed in school and life*

Developed and Approved by the Gunnison Hinsdale ECC

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*On electronic version, Budget is separate Excel document

I. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties are located in south central Colorado, 200 and 260 miles respectively from Denver. Gunnison County encompasses over 3,000 square miles and includes the city of Gunnison and towns of Crested Butte, Mt. Crested Butte, Pitkin and Marble. The county is home to 14,190 people with immigrants accounting for 10% of the population, an average age of 30, and a population density of 4.3 persons per square mile. Economically, the county's strongest industries are tourism, education and ranching. Western State College is located in the city of Gunnison, with 2,500 students, and one school district, Gunnison Watershed SD RE1J, serves the entire county of approximately 1,600 school age students. With 78% of the county being federally owned, Gunnison County is well known for its year round recreation opportunities.

According to West Central Public Health Partnership's Regional Needs Assessment, Hinsdale County is one of the most remote counties both in Colorado and in the United States. The county includes 1,124 square miles, 95% of which is public lands. Lake City is the only incorporated town in the county, accounting for half of the county's 804 residents. Currently the least populated county in the state, at one time Hinsdale County was home to numerous mines and several small mining towns. Hinsdale County's main employers are the service industry, construction, government, and the school district. Hinsdale County School District RE-1 operates one school, the Lake City Community School, serving a pre-school through 12th grade enrollment of approximately 100 students. Despite a decline in jobs since 2000, school enrollment has increased in this county.

Demographic	Hinsdale	Gunnison	Colorado
Total Population	808	14,264	4,722,460
Young Child Population (under 5)	41	899	347,145
Under 5 yrs receiving WIC	N/A	16.2%	18.0%
Median Household Income	\$38,891	\$38,979	\$50,105
English language learners	0%	6.7%	12.8%
Under 6 yrs with all available parents in workforce*	71%	61%	

Source: Colorado Children's Campaign 2007 (Kids Count Colorado, 2005 Data)

*Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

II. SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

In July 2007 Gunnison Hinsdale Health and Human Services received an Early Childhood Systems Building Grant as an emerging community. This grant is administered through the Colorado Division of Child Care with the express intent of increasing accessibility, availability and affordability of quality childcare services for families. Emerging communities awarded these funds are responsible to develop and implement high quality early childhood systems in local communities that address four domains and eight goal areas.

Since August 2007, the Gunnison Hinsdale ECC has been meeting to formalize the council governance, conduct a community assessment and engage in strategic planning that will guide its work over the next two to three years. The ECC is new in its formation and while many

key stakeholders are currently participating, challenges remain to actively engage more parents and private child care providers. This council has come at an opportune time as early childhood education and services have been identified as a priority issue to be addressed. Through this comprehensive assessment and planning process, the council hopes to emerge as a key resource and action group for early childhood.

III. ASSESSMENT BY DOMAINS

1-Early Care and Education

Quality early childhood care and education is highly beneficial to children, ages 0-5. Current research indicates that quality care early in a child’s life can play a significant role in healthy pro-social development and early learning as well as prevention of future problematic and high-risk behaviors.

Licensed Childcare

Licensed childcare generally includes licensed childcare centers, licensed homes, school-based and after school programs. It can also include licensed individuals who provide care directly in a family’s home. With an increasing number of families where all available parents are working, quality childcare, beginning with infancy, is a valuable commodity.

Qualistar, the resource and referral agency throughout the state, reports the following number of licensed providers and child care slots for Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties:

Number of Licensed Child Care Providers: 2005 - 2007

Location	2005	2006	2007
Gunnison	17	M	16
Hinsdale	2	M	2

(Source: Qualistar)

Number of Licensed Child Care Slots: 2005 - 2007

Location	2005	2006	2007
Gunnison	326	M	544
Hinsdale	32	M	32

(Source: Qualistar)

Bright Futures, located in Telluride, is the regional Qualistar entity for both counties. One of its roles is to serve as the resource and referral entity for parents seeking licensed providers. At the end of 2007, Bright Futures reported the following statistics on licensed providers in Gunnison and Hinsdale counties:

Provider	Licensed Capacity	Age Range
<i>Lake City</i>		
Hinsdale School District- Lake Community School	20	3-5 years
Wee Care	12	2-12 years
<i>Crested Butte</i>		
Jennifer White	8	3-5 years
Little Red Schoolhouse	35	2.5-6 years
Paradise Place	45	1.5-9 years
Stepping Stones	71	1-9 years
<i>Gunnison</i>		
Creative Corner - Sheila Russell	8	1-6 years
Cynthia Summer	8	1.5 months - 11 years
Gunnison RE-1J Preschool	60	2.5-7 years
Julie Townsley	9	1 week - 13 years
Seasons School House	10	2.5-6 years
Susan Johnson	9	2 weeks -12 years
Tenderfoot Child and Family Ctr	147	1.5 months – 13 years
<i>Marble</i>		
Crystal Valley Preschool –Marble	15	2.5-6 years
<i>Total Licensed Capacity</i>	<i>457</i>	

Source: Bright Futures, 2007

Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties have a total “Under 5” population of 940 children. Compared with the current licensed capacity for childcare, it appears availability is lacking. Specifically, Gunnison Preschool reports a current waitlist of 13 children and Crested Butte no longer has any licensed infant childcare. The result is that parents are left with the option to drive long distances for childcare, seek interim care while on waitlists and/or choose unlicensed providers.

In a February 2008 phone survey of local childcare centers and homes, providers were asked how many phone calls they receive per week requesting childcare and how many of those calls they are able to accommodate. Of the six respondents, they reported a range of 0-10 calls per week and all but one provider stated they are unable to accommodate most of the requests for childcare. These providers consistently listed “more childcare centers and licensed daycare” as the most pressing need for early childcare and “infants and toddlers” as the age group most in need. The final question in this phone survey asked providers to identify the two biggest obstacles they encounter in their profession. Continuing education requirements and long hours/poor compensation were the top obstacles identified by these providers.

The above data and provider surveys support consistent anecdotal reports that there are insufficient, quality childcare services to meet the needs in both Gunnison and Hinsdale counties.

Resource and Referral

Resource and Referral systems are another key factor in early childcare and education. These systems can provide a central “Go-To” place for parents and providers seeking information, training, and referrals for childcare. Qualistar is the licensing entity for Colorado,

serving as the resource and referral system for licensed providers, providing professional development trainings and working to track and document early childhood services throughout the state. Families seeking licensed childcare can contact the Qualistar entity, Bright Futures, via telephone or internet, complete a brief survey and then receive a “best match” referral for childcare. In turn, requests for service, licensed capacity, and current enrollment are all tracked in a data base system. From 2005 to 2007, Qualistar reports the following resource and referral contacts for Gunnison and Hinsdale counties:

Child Care Resource and Referral Phone Calls: 2005 - 2007

Location	2005	2006	2007
Gunnison	0	M	1
Hinsdale	0	M	0

Child Care Resource and Referral Internet: 2007

Location	2007
Gunnison	21
Hinsdale	0

(source: Qualistar)

It is unlikely that these numbers accurately reflect the number of requests and referrals for child care services over the last year in either county. This raises the question of why more people are not accessing this system to find childcare. The Gunnison Hinsdale Department of Human Services reports frequent calls from parents seeking childcare. The department provides these families with a listing of providers. The local CSU Extension also lists licensed providers on their website. This dispersed access suggests that coordination of services may be an additional need for both Gunnison and Hinsdale counties to address under Early Child Care and Education.

Foster Care and Child Welfare

In Gunnison-Hinsdale Counties, 160 reports for investigation of Dependency and Neglect are made annually. On average, 27 child welfare cases are opened each month and of these cases 10 children in the caseload are under the age of 5. Additionally of the 27 cases opened each month, 10 children end up in out-of-home placement. In 2007 that added up to 2,361 total days of out-of-home placement. This number is determined by the total of out-of-home placement days for each child. Currently, between Gunnison and Hinsdale counties, there are insufficient foster care providers to accommodate the need for out-of-home placement locally. This means that at any given time there are approximately nine youth under the age of 18 in placements outside the two counties. On average, four to six of those nine youth are under the age of six. When children are placed in other counties it makes family visits difficult, prohibits continued attendance at their home school, and adds further disruption to already challenging circumstances. These issues can greatly impact young children in foster care and the county has a compelling need for additional, local foster care providers.

2- Family Support and Parent Education

Early childhood needs encompass parents and families as much as they do the direct needs of the child. Opportunities for parents to learn, find support, develop new skills and access resources are important components of raising healthy children. In Gunnison and Hinsdale counties the numerous resources for parents are described below:

Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP)

CPKP is a state funded program that funds qualified children to attend preschool or full-day kindergarten at Gunnison Preschool (the school district preschool), Tenderfoot or Stepping Stones up in Crested Butte. Qualifying children can also attend full day K for free at the Gunnison Elementary School. Schools must qualify to participate. This qualification process includes demonstrating quality through a number of criteria and two annual site visits. The CPKP is administered by the school district and there are currently 20 free full day kindergarten slots and 42 half-day preschool slots.

Gunnison Library

Gunnison Library has a youth librarian and offers weekly opportunities for literacy learning. In addition there is an evening family story time that teaches early literacy skills, a parenting section and a biblio-therapy section is coming soon. Bibliotherapy is a therapeutic approach using books. For example, if a child has problems with bed-wetting, parents can access books that address the issue and provide guidance for parents to help their child.

Gunnison Valley Bright Beginnings

The Gunnison Valley Bright Beginnings (GVBB) program mission is “to provide a bright beginning for all Gunnison and Hinsdale County children by helping families support their children’s physical, emotional, and intellectual development during the critical first three years of life”. In a variety of settings, trained community volunteers and agency partners visit families with children prenatal to age three to provide emotional support and deliver basic parenting information about child and brain development, early learning, the importance of immunizations and having a medical provider, nutrition, safety, literacy, quality childcare, parent-child bonding, connections to community resources, and other topics. This program is available in Spanish.

Bright Beginnings Participation (source: Colorado BB database)

Year	Total Families Served	
	Gunnison	Hinsdale
1997	15	0
1998	5	0
1999	60	1
2000	167	2
2001	113	1
2002	115	9
2003	64	5
2004	104	14
2005	119	9
2006	156	3
2007	100	5

Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS)

MOPS is an international Christian-based group designed to encourage moms through their children’s uniquely challenging years from infancy through kindergarten. MOPS meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month and the average attendance is 20-25 moms per session.

Nurturing Parenting Program

The Nurturing Program teaches age-specific parenting skills along with the need to nurture oneself; these two elements are considered equally important. Parents learn about recognizing and understanding feelings; infant and child development; brain development; nurturing parenting routines; alternatives to hitting; effective non-violent discipline; and ways to build self-esteem and self-concept in themselves and their children.

Session	# Parent Participants		# Children Participants (0-8 years)	
	Gunnison	Hinsdale	Gunnison	Hinsdale
Fall 2005	n/a	16	n/a	16
Spring 2006	n/a	3	n/a	3
Fall 2006	n/a	5	n/a	6
Spring 2007	20	5	18	3
Fall 2007	14	6	12	4
Spring 2008	15	6	12	4

(Source: local NPP records)

Positive Parenting

Positive parenting is a series of five parenting classes sponsored by the mentoring program, Partners. This offering is for parents with children of all ages and is available at no charge to participants. Childcare is available by appointment for these evening classes that are offered three times each year. Positive Parenting has been available consistently since 2007 and each five-week session has the capacity for 16 parent participants.

WEE Gatherings

WEE Gatherings provides an hour of playtime each week for parents with children birth to 3 years, and is a time that highlights play as learning within parent-child interactions. A carefully prepared enriched environment is set up every week for children to explore and for parents to have the opportunity to use self and parallel talk with their child. All areas of development can be engaged in but language & social-emotional domains are emphasized. Class size is open to 15 families.

Originally this class was supported by I.D.E.A. from 1995-2002. Then there was a 2-year lapse without funding. SIRFI then picked it up with DHS giving 20% support. Each year the SIRFI grant diminishes by 20% so this year funding incorporated just two 8-week sessions as opposed to four. The grant ends in 2009.

In addition to the programs listed above, the communities also benefit from *Parents as Teachers (PAT)*, *Early Literacy Classes (weekly classes for infants and toddlers as well as*

preschool ages) Family Literacy Class, and the Early Childhood Parent Resource Center (Located at Tenderfoot).

Some of the concerns related to this domain include, access issues due to times that programs are offered and/or space limitations, difficulty getting certain parents to take advantage of the offerings, and the de-centralized Early Childhood situation which makes it harder for parents to know what opportunities are available.

3- Mental Health

Number of Children Receiving Public Mental Health Services in Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties

Age	2004	2005	2006
Infants – Under 5 yrs	3	1	1
5 – 12 yrs	12	21	31
13 – 17 yrs	30	41	49
Total	35	63	81

Source: Midwestern Colorado Mental Health Center (2007)

In Gunnison and Hinsdale, community mental health services are provided through Midwestern Colorado Mental Health Center. Midwestern provides an array of consultation and direct services targeted early childhood mental health.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is characterized collaborative relationships, building the capacity of the child’s caregivers, and the indirect nature of intervention relationships. The intervention of an early childhood mental health consultant is indirect, working with and through staff and caregivers rather than directly with the child. By working in collaboration with staff and caregivers to build their capacity to problem solve and change practices, the consultant influences the experiences of and outcomes for an individual child, family, staff member and program. Consultation also includes efforts to seek and obtain coordinated services across systems when necessary. The Early Childhood Specialist serving Gunnison and Hinsdale is based out of Montrose and provides the following services:

Consultation for Staff

- Classroom observations
- Suggestions for strategies to make environment pro-social
- Support staff with classroom management
- Trains staff on behavior management techniques
- Train staff on accessing mental health resources
- Educate staff on children’s mental health issues
- Support staff working with children with challenging behaviors
- Telephone Consultation
- Resource and Referral

Consultation for Programs

- Promote wellness
- Address within the program

- Promote team building
- Provide staff support
- Train staff on cultural competence
- Address programmatic issues
- Consult with the director
- Identify and address program needs
- Telephone Consultation

Consultation for Parents

- Telephone Consultation
- Resource and Referral

Direct community mental health services for early childhood are provided to both counties through Midwestern’s Gunnison office. Direct service offerings for parents and children include:

- 24 hour Emergency Services Access
- Broad Scope of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Individual, Group and Family Therapy
- Psycho-diagnostic Services
- Medication Services
- Case Management Services
- Community Screenings and Evaluations
- Outpatient Services for Adults and Adolescents
- Strategies for Self-Improvement and Change
- Counseling for Problems in Living
- Early Childhood Services (Age 0-5)

4- Health Care and Medical Home

Gunnison and Hinsdale are both classified as frontier counties, which brings unique challenges when assessing healthcare. Hinsdale is designated as a “Health Professional Shortage Area” by CDPHE, meaning there are not enough local providers for the county’s needs. What is reported as adequate in Hinsdale is an “accessible system for providing sliding scale medical care”. Gunnison, on the other hand, does not suffer a shortage of health professionals but has only limited access to sliding scale treatment through the Light Program, which provides vouchers for eligible clients. Gunnison also receives an El Pomar grant for health services. Both counties have an inadequate number of dental providers for children, with no Medicaid providers in either Hinsdale or Gunnison. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentists recommend children received bi-annual check ups after their first teeth erupt, but reports are that most providers prefer not to see children under four years.

All of these general population concerns have significant impact on the healthcare options available to children.

When looking at early childhood healthcare it is important to include prenatal care as well as the trends for the population in general. The recently released West Central Public Health

Partnership’s Regional Health Needs Assessment (2007) dedicates two sections to Access to Care and Maternal and Child Health. Their regional report which includes Gunnison and Hinsdale highlights that lack of health insurance, inadequate dental care access and transportation as the main concerns related to Access to Healthcare. Looking at Maternal and Child Health, the report notes positive trends of decreasing numbers of women smoking during pregnancy and decreased rate of death among children aged 1-14. The negative trends noted include infant mortality rate above the state average, and an increase in low birth rate. The percentage of fully immunized two-year olds was 85% in Gunnison County and 67% in Hinsdale County for 2005. The following two tables also provide statistics on prenatal care and three-risk-factor births:

Percentage of Births Receiving First Trimester Prenatal Care: 1999 - 2005

Location	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Gunnison	94.5%	92.1%	92.8%	94.6%	94.4%	90.1%	91.8%
Hinsdale	100.0%	87.5%	87.5%	100%	100%	100%	85.7%

Associated Counts

Location	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Gunnison	104	174	167	159	168	145	156
Hinsdale	9	7	7	9	4	10	6

Percentage of Three-Risk-Factor Births*: 2000 - 2004

Location	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Gunnison	3.7%	1.7%	4.7%	3.9%	3.1%
Hinsdale	0.0%	S	S	S	0.0%
Colorado	8.1%	8.1%	8.7%	8.3%	8.3%

Source: Community Level Information on Kids (CLIKS)

* Three-risk-factor births are births to unmarried women under age 25 with less than a high school education, as a percentage of total live births.

When considering resources, Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties have a number of programs in place to serve the health needs of young children through Public Health and through Gunnison Valley Hospital:

Public Health Programs

Child Find – Identifies children birth to age five who have special needs. Initial screenings and assessments are free.

Colorado Child Health Plan plus (CHP+) – Provides basic health and dental services for children under 19 years. Eligibility is based on income.

Early Intervention Program – A service for all children birth to 36 months of age who show a delay in one or more areas of development including motor skills, speech, or cognitive development. Services are coordinated with Community Options and the school district.

Gunnison Dental Initiative – For children 2-18 years that do not have private dental insurance or who do not qualify for Medicaid or CHP+.

Health Care Program for Children with Special Needs (HCP) – Provides specialty clinics in rural parts of state for children 0-21 years with special needs.

Infant Development Program – Partner program between Public Health and Gunnison Valley Hospital. Provides screening and referral service for infants with potential for physical, developmental, or medical delays.

Infantsee Program – Free comprehensive eye exam for all infants 0-12 months.

Nurse Family Partnership - The Nurse Family Partnership home visitation program uses multiple intervention strategies to assist first-time mothers improve pregnancy outcomes by practicing sound health-related behaviors. Examples of targeted behaviors include obtaining prenatal care from their physicians, improving diet, understanding proper weight gain, and bonding with the baby before birth. The five main domains used during the 2 1/2 year program include personal and environmental health, life course development, maternal role, family and friends and health and human services. Currently the NFP can work with up to 15 women and filled its capacity, having to turn away 13 young women

Prenatal Program – Provides prenatal care for all uninsured women.

Well Child Screenings – Screenings for those without insurance.

Gunnison Valley Hospital Programs

Mom and Baby Care Program – Newborn children born at the hospital can receive a free home visit by a nurse to assist with any concerns, answer questions, assess baby’s health including weight, and make referrals to other resources.

Newborn screening Program – Newborn hearing and metabolic screening available through Gunnison Valley Hospital.

In addition to the programs listed above, Gunnison’s Public Health department has been seeking funds to address continuity of children’s healthcare. There is an identified need for a Child Care Health Consultant to administer developmental assessments, provide referral services, consult with childcare centers and other providers on children’s health and immunizations, provide education, facilitate linkage with CHP +, Medicaid and other insurers, and provide essential outreach to the growing immigrant community (110% increase in the last 10 years). The need for this position is supported by indications such as low immunizations rates, lack of insurance coverage combined with the state C- average on the Colorado Health Report card in the areas of Healthy Children and Healthy Beginnings. Further, Gunnison and Hinsdale counties remain without a pediatrician and with barriers to full access to healthcare for all children.

IV. ASSESSMENT BY GOAL AREAS

Members of the Early Childhood Council listed what they see as strengths and weaknesses in Gunnison and Hinsdale counties for each of the eight goal areas identified by the state. These qualitative assessments demonstrate what providers, professionals and parents experience “on the ground” and in their daily work in the early childhood profession. Except when a specific program is noted, comments below are general comments on the current situation in both counties.

Key:

BB= Bright Beginnings

CCAP= Child Care Assistance Program

EC= Early Childhood

ECC= Early Childhood Council

NFP= Nurse Family Partnership

NPP = Nurturing Parent Program

PAT= Parents as Teachers

1. Program Availability

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Good referral system in place for children's health care needs+ Programs are available for pro-active parents+ NFP provides strong one-on-one service from prenatal through child's first two years+ There are a wide variety of styles and philosophies to meet the unique needs of children and families,+ Excellent people involved in these programs+ State funds available for preschoolers and kindergarteners who are "at-risk"+ Good access to available programs (many are free or have low fees)+ Early childhood programming available for free for ANY family through BB. This program serves as excellent point of entry due to its accessibility and emphasis on providing referrals+ CCAP has a high income limit so many families can be eligible+ Tenderfoot has scholarships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of mental health services for all ages- Lack of childcare providers, especially quality licensed centers/homes- NFP can only take 12-14 clients in the Gunnison area at a time- Not enough awareness of the critical nature of quality early childhood, or what quality really means for early childhood education- Programming for parents offered at limited times-Weather and transportation issues limit the ability of some families to attend- Lack of adequate funding for high quality programs- Low pay and low prestige for early childhood professionals- Resource capacity limits some program expansion- Lack of centralized facility for providing early childhood programming- Need One-stop or coordinated division to manage childcare administration-Referral and resource support is outside our communities-No one-stop contact for EC offerings and facilitation of collaboration among EC entities for referrals-Relatively little EC programming. There is no HIPPPY or Head Start, and limited PAT- No public preschool available in Crested Butte

2. Program Quality

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>+ Several excellent programs with a couple either Qualistar Rated or in the process</p> <p>+ Multiple evidence based, proven programs with good local outcomes (NFP, NPP, PAT)</p> <p>+ Excellent early interventions and high standards of care and education for children with disabilities</p> <p>+ BB is a well-respected program, locally and statewide. It continually demonstrates a high level of satisfaction among participants. Volunteers and agency partners are trained in program delivery quality standards established by the state office.</p> <p>+ Passionate people involved in EC who are committed to providing quality programming</p> <p>+ All NPP facilitators receive facilitator training</p> <p>+ CCAP has good state support and has strong encouragement and support from other counties</p>	<p>- Sometimes rumor and conjecture cloud the community's view of programs</p> <p>- The transient population in Gunnison that may only engage for short time in program</p> <p>- NFP's demanding schedule of 2 visits/month for 2 years deters some parents</p> <p>- Transience of programs that seem to come and go, depending on community interest and/or parent involvement</p> <p>- Lack of understanding of the importance of quality early childhood education</p> <p>-Lack of understanding of best practices in early childhood (developmentally appropriate practice in curriculum and philosophy)</p>

3. Accountability

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>+ NFP has substantial documentation and data reporting spanning the family to the NFP throughout the region. Extensive supervision and team meetings as well as structured guidelines for participating families</p> <p>+ Local BB has state level affiliate that conducts annual site-visits, quarterly teleconferences and an annual regional coordinators conference. Local BB programs are evaluated annually, and, in turn, local program conduct participant satisfaction survey</p> <p>+ CCAP has monthly teleconferences for all counties with state is acting as a resource</p> <p>+ All children in publicly funded programs such as CPKP and those receiving special education services through Part C and the school district must be included in ongoing assessments of their developmental progress, then reported at the state and federal levels.</p>	<p>- Challenge to balance caseloads, quality service, funding and compensation</p>

4. Organizational Structure and Governance

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Invest in Kids does an excellent job of training and giving us information about the program. Very tight structure and governance. + We are working on this through the ECC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EC industry is loosely organized, programs and providers change and there is no central location to report these changes and keep information updated

5. Parent and Family Engagement

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + NPP, NFP, PAT have evidenced based positive outcomes. NPP retention rates have been good and participation excellent. If parents get enrolled in the BB program, they receive wonderful info to use at home + Programs work hard to include parents + Parents and families that are involved have a much higher rate of satisfaction + BB visits families one-on-one or in group setting + NPP is a family-based program where parents and children attend together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time offerings for classes limit who can participate - Often the parents who need the programs most resist attending - Programs are already taxed to their limit before trying to add family engagement so it falls low on the priority list

6. Public Engagement

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + NPP, BB relies heavily on volunteer involvement + Programs benefit from public contributions and support + Gunnison Country Times, The Gunnison Shopper, Hometown Happenings, and radio station KBUT offer free public service announcements, articles of interest, and press coverage of events + Word of mouth endorsements and recommendations are strong in these communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public lack of awareness about the importance of early childhood stimulation, education, and brain development - “Public School” starts no earlier than age 3 - No funding for consistent outreach or marketing of EC and its importance - Time constraints to provide public education - Public may not be aware of the lack of childcare and therefore those who may be able to help out are unaware that they are needed

7. Professional Development

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>+ There are excellent programs out there that really try to meet the state requirement of 15 hours per year</p> <p>+ Western State College</p> <p>+ NFP’s development is very thorough. Conferences are held annually for nurses involved in the program throughout the state</p>	<p>- Not enough time and money to devote,</p> <p>- Some professional development activities are not a good use of time</p> <p>- Local offerings are minimal</p> <p>- Never enough money for childcare providers</p> <p>- An early childhood professional book club, where you could get credit would be nice</p> <p>- Out-of-area opportunities can be too expensive due to travel</p>

8. Funding and Finance

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>+ In NFP there is good mileage payment, salaries are not capped, and the program’s generous with budget for client incentives</p> <p>+ Individuals and businesses are generous contributors</p> <p>+Established relationships with certain key EC foundations</p> <p>+Tenderfoot offers scholarships for those who are over income for CCAP</p> <p>+ Public resources are involved</p>	<p>- NFP has only one source in Colorado—The Master Tobacco Settlement that almost went belly-up last year</p> <p>- It is truly not enough. To run a high quality program with all the requirements involved, it is EXTREMELY expensive. Families in this valley cannot afford to pay what ECE truly costs. The school district provides in kind support to the public preschool, making it an affordable choice. However, that kind of support is not available to the private centers and they struggle day in and day out. To raise money takes an enormous effort. ECE professionals are not trained business people and money managers. This list goes on</p> <p>- Need for grant writer</p> <p>- Multiple grants sustaining single programs. The time and energy spent securing funding happens at expense of direct service and program quality</p> <p>- Those who are just over the income limit for CCAP don’t have help to pay the full cost of care and can’t afford it</p> <p>- Intermittent funding to sustain certain programming</p>

V. Sources

The following local and state level sources were accessed for this assessment:

ASPIRE – OMNI Research Group, 2008

Bright Futures, 2007

CHF CCHC Proposal, 2007

Colorado Bright Beginnings, 2007

Colorado Children’s Campaign- Kids Count Colorado, 2007

Key Informants from Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties, 2008

Nurturing Parenting Program, 2008

Qualistar, 2007

US Census Bureau, varied

West Central Public Health Partnership’s Regional Needs Assessment, 2007

**Gunnison Hinsdale Early Childhood Council
STRATEGIC PLAN**

GOAL ONE Increase availability of, and accessibility to, early childhood services for Gunnison-Hinsdale families and providers

Strategy 1: Create locally based referral and resource capacity for parents, providers and caregivers

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Determine Budget and funding sources for first year	Established FY08-09 budget	May 2008-completed	ECC Treasurer and EC Coordinator
2. Hire Coordinator: 1- Create Job Description, 2-Advertise Position, 3- Interview and Hire position	.5 FTE Coordinator hired	July 2008-completed	Hiring Subcommittee
3. Identify central Gunnison R & R location with local phone number, internet access	Rental contract for local R&R office space	July 2008-completed	EC Council
4. Meet with Bright Futures, Qualistar and state to coordinate Qualistar component of R&R	Written working agreement for coordination of Qualistar R&R component	Initiate May 2008, Review as noted in agreement-completed	EC Coordinator, State Liaison, Bright Futures Director, Qualistar Representative
5. Advertise local R&R office to public	Newspaper ads and articles in all local papers, PSA's on local radio stations, Email or phone outreach to providers	Summer 2008 Weekly beginning 3 weeks prior to opening-Completed & ongoing	EC Coordinator
6. Ongoing operation of R&R office	Local office open 15-20 hrs/wk	Summer 2008-completed	EC Coordinator
7. Applied for the Colorado Trust Planning Grant	Hire Grant Coordinator to write Grant with end goal of hiring Health Integration RN for 5 year	Jan 09-June 09 ongoing	Carol Dawson, Grant writer ECC Colorado Trust sub-committee

	implementation period		
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Strategy 2: *Increase accessibility to early childhood services for parents through creation of a website to support resource and referral information (Accessibility refers to the ease with which consumers can make use and/or locate existing services)*

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Meet with CSU Extension to discuss in-kind contribution of website design and ongoing maintenance	MOA with CSU outlining in-kind contribution	June 2008-completed	CSU Extension Representative, EC Coordinator
2. Develop website to include: - <i>Family Resources</i> – Listing of Providers, Parent educational and resource information, Family events, Parent trainings, Bilingual access - <i>Provider Resources</i> - EC offerings, Training opportunities, Updates from state, ECCL and ECCAT, Licensing Information, Bilingual access - <i>Evaluation</i> – website counter and feedback form	Contact with CSU Extension office is on a weekly basis	Ongoing	
3. Provide training to providers on the website – what is available, how to contribute to the site, helping families access site	Website established Website updated weekly	Summer 09	CSU Web Designer, EC Coordinator, ECC
4. Develop information pamphlet with website address and phone number for	Trained providers able to access site and instruct families on use of	April 09	CSU Web Designer, EC Coordinator

new R&R	site		
5. Include website address in all media	Website Info sheet published and available	Jan 2009-completed	EC Coordinator
	Website address displayed on all ECC media and outreach	Fall 2008 then ongoing	EC Coordinator

Strategy 3: Increase accessibility of trainings to providers and parents

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Advertise training opportunities on website	Trainings for parents and providers are listed and updated monthly	September 2008 then ongoing completed	Training Subcommittee, CSU Web Designer, EC Coordinator
2. Offer 2 trainings locally which have only been offered out of town in the past	2 local trainings implemented	Spring 2009	Training Subcommittee, EC Coordinator
3. Resurrect EC Conference and offer it in Gunnison	EC Conference takes place in Gunnison	Summer 2009 Completed 11/15/08	Training Subcommittee

Strategy 4: Decrease fragmentation of resources

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Create a map of existing EC Resources in community	EC Resource map distributed to ECC	Spring 2009	EC Coordinator
2. Identify if overlap exists and make suggestions to eliminate duplication of services	Documented recommendations of ECC	Spring 2009	ECC
2. Use ECC meetings to network and share information related to the EC Community	Standing Line Item on EC Agenda for Updates and Announcements	July 2008 then Ongoing	ECC, EC Coordinator

GOAL TWO Increase the number of licensed childcare providers, centers, homes, and foster homes by 15

Strategy 1: Develop a public relations campaign to encourage individuals to become providers

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Survey current and would-be providers to determine most common barriers	Brief phone survey completed by 10 people with results compiled	Summer 2008 Completed and ongoing	PR Subcommittee, EC Coordinator
Discuss and clearly define “Provider” as it relates to both childcare and foster care. Decide whether to have broad definition to include both foster care and childcare together and then reflect these decisions and definitions in all outreach, media and materials	Media and outreach materials is clear in its definition of “provider” and both childcare and foster care are covered	Winter 2009	ECC
2. Develop PR Campaign with targeted messaging developed from survey results	Targeted message developed in English and Spanish	Winter 2009	PR Subcommittee, EC Coordinator
3. “Get the word out” through consistent, ongoing, multi-media approach	PR campaign messaging on website, flyers distributed to targeted locations monthly, Newspaper ads in local papers at least 2x/month, Newspaper article at launch and then bi-monthly	Summer 2009 then ongoing	EC Coordinator
4. Create a step by step Checklist on “How to become a Licensed Provider” including FAQs and Resource list	Checklist created online and hardcopy and available bilingual	Fall 2008 Still to be finished Feb 17 th 2009	ECC & Coordinator
5. Foster Home Recruitment Dinner and Media Campaign -radio -posters -flyers	- Contact local churches and other audiences to provide information about the lack of Foster Parents in our Valley (So far- 2 new foster homes are to be licensed as a result of this effort)	Nov 2008-completed	

Strategy 2: Provide financial incentives to develop up to 15 new childcare providers

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Collate information on expenses related to becoming licensed and determine existing funding sources	Documentation on full costs to become licensed, # of targeted new providers and funding source to provide scholarships	Spring 09	ECC, EC Coordinator
2. Create scholarship fund with guidelines for how to access funds, including limitations to the scholarship	Funds and process available through new R&R to assist up to 15 new and/or existing providers become licensed	Summer 2009-Started & ongoing	ECC, EC Coordinator
3. Advertise scholarship opportunity through media campaign outlined in Strategy #1	Scholarship opportunity made known through media and advertising streams	Fall 2009	ECC, EC Coordinator

Strategy 3: Provide financial assistance to retain existing providers and their staff

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Develop a pool of substitute/respice providers	Substitute providers available so that staff can attend meetings, trainings, and receive some respice	Summer 2009	ECC, EC Coordinator
2. Provider local trainings as outlined under Goal #1	See Goal #1 Local conference held annually	See Goal #1 Completed & ongoing	See Goal #1

Strategy 4: Create mentoring and peer support mechanisms to support new and existing providers

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Develop mentoring guidelines and	Guidelines available to potential	Spring 2010	ECC, EC Coordinator

system where experienced EC professionals can volunteer as mentors to newer EC professionals	mentors including expectations and time commitments		
2. Recruit pool of mentors	5-8 volunteer mentors	Spring 2010	ECC, EC Coordinator
3. Make mentoring resource available to EC community	Access guidelines and list available on website and at local R&R office	Spring 2010 and then ongoing	ECC, EC Coordinator

GOAL THREE Gunnison-Hinsdale ECC has a formally established early childhood governance and administrative structure

Strategy 1: Develop a strategic plan for early childhood in Gunnison and Hinsdale counties

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Develop comprehensive strategic plan and budget to guide work of council over next 12-18 months	Completed Strategic Plan	Ongoing	ECC and Coordinator with input from State Liaison and other stakeholders
2. Use Strategic Plan as a working document and update on progress regularly	Strategic Plan is reviewed and updated every two months at ECC meetings	updates and revisions every 6 months Jan and July	ECC

Strategy 2: Formalize systems for tracking and evaluating work of ECC

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Develop a way to track process evaluation. Document “Outputs” of Strategic Plan using this tool.	Outputs are tracked as Process evaluation	ongoing	EC Coordinator
2. Develop a Provider survey and a Parent/Consumer survey to gather feedback on success of meeting stated goals.	2 Surveys developed, administered and analyzed	November 2009 then annually	Evaluation Subcommittee, EC Coordinator, State Liaison

3. Use outcomes of surveys to guide revisions and changes to Strategic Plan	Strategic Plan updated annually	Jan 2010 then annually	Evaluation Subcommittee, EC Coordinator
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Strategy 3: Formalize governance structure of council

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Review and revise current Operating Agreements to address gap areas and/or areas the council agreed to revisit. Address core functions to eventually include: systems oversight, public engagement, communication, resource development, workforce and leadership development, fiscal management, accountability and quality management and evaluation	ECC Operating Agreements are formalized with core functions of council defined	June 2008- Completed. To be done annually	ECC and Coordinator
2. Develop structure for the ECC appropriate to meeting goals of the Strategic Plan and the culture and needs of the community	Roles and responsibilities of council members are clearly defined and governance positions are filled for FY08-09 (Including Coordinator position)	June 2008	ECC and Coordinator
3. Review models of effective EC Systems that have sustainability and long-term stakeholder commitment	Models (from state level) presented to council and stakeholders for review	June 2009	Subcommittee on Systems Oversight/ or ECC
4. Develop a longer term Organizational structure for ECC that meets the strengths needs and culture of the community	Formalized ECC Organizational Structure	Spring 2008 Partially completed	Subcommittee on Systems Oversight and full council

GOAL FOUR: To strengthen coordinated efforts of public and private stakeholders to support health and wellness in young children.

Strategy one: Seek funds to develop and implement goal

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. Establish task group to work on Colorado Trust Grant	Group will develop plan for implementation of grant	Jan 2009	ECC Colorado Trust Grant Sub-Committee
2. Apply for Colorado Trust Grant	Grant money will be awarded	July 2009	Carol Dawson & Colorado Trust planning grant sub-committee of ECC

Strategy Two: Health services including physical, dental, and mental health care are provided in an integrated, coordinated fashion to maximize access for all families and to minimize waste of limited resources.

Work Activities	Outputs	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
1. The ECC will develop a job description and hire a part-time coordinator for 6 month planning period as well as a facilitator for the first 3 meetings.	During this time the planning grant will be completed.	February 2009	Carol Dawson and Meeting facilitator as well as Colorado Trust planning grant sub-committee of ECC
2. The planning committee will develop a Vision, Value Statement and a timeline of activities facilitated by Coordinator and Facilitator and.	The Vision, Value statement, and timeline will be implemented.	February 2009	Carol Dawson and Meeting facilitator