

MESA COUNTY

# COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

NOVEMBER 2023

2023



MESA COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH

# BACKGROUND

---

A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is part of the Community Health Assessment and Improvement cycle.

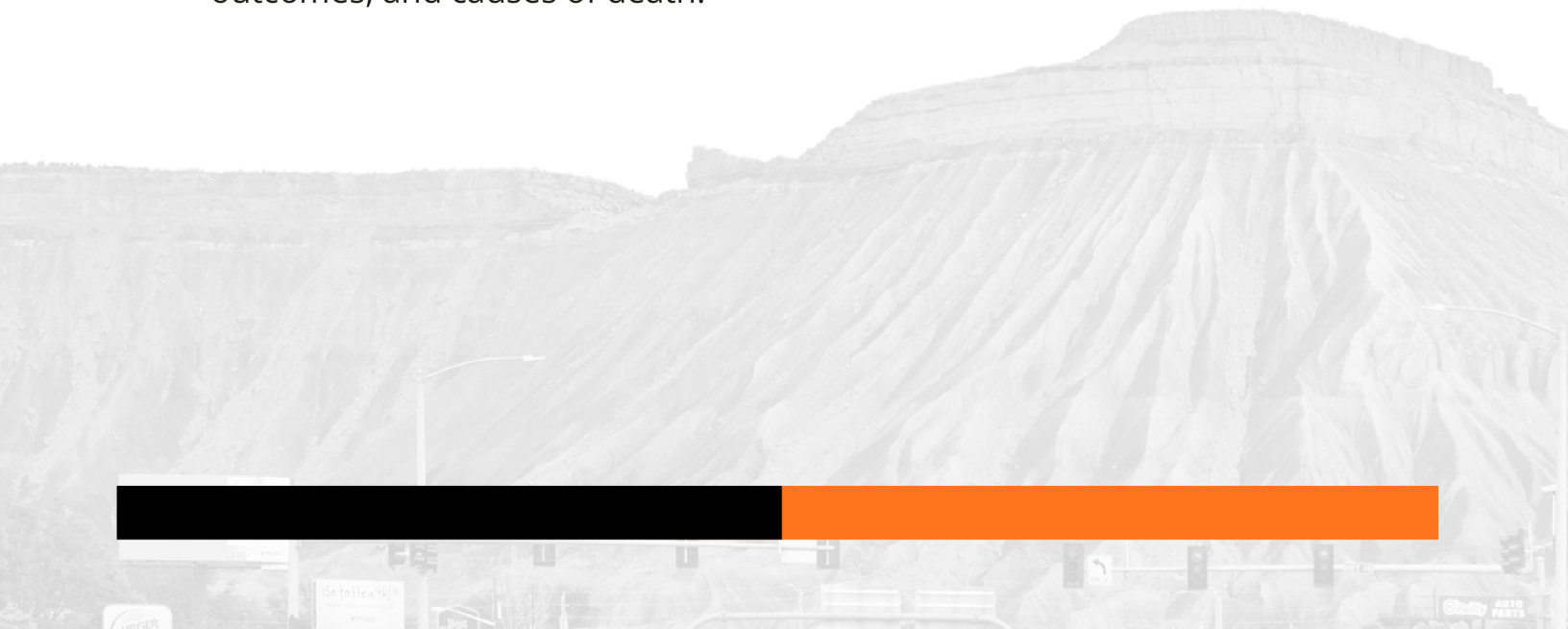
In Mesa County, **public health and non-profit hospitals collaborate** to complete a community health needs assessment (CHNA) every three years.

The assessment is a comprehensive look at the **current status of our community**. It includes both qualitative and quantitative data on the social determinants of health along with health behaviors, health outcomes, and causes of death.

Data and insights are brought together in **key findings that include areas of strength and areas of opportunity**. The CHIP follows the CHNA and identifies specific priorities for action and progress over the next few years.



Outlined in this document are **Mesa County's priority areas, goals, and objectives**.





# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mesa County Public Health (MCPH) recognizes that **equitable access to high-quality early childhood education is an influential factor in a healthy life trajectory**, making individuals more likely to graduate from high school or college and get high-paying jobs. It is a backbone industry, supporting both our local economy and working families.

As a child care desert, **Mesa County faces a severe shortage of early childhood education (ECE) services**, hurting children, families, and the local economy.

High-quality ECE is crucial for the emotional, social, and cognitive development of young children. Accessible ECE also alleviates stress for families and allows parents to participate in the local workforce.



DEFINE: **CHILD CARE DESERT**  
**MORE THAN 3 KIDS, AGE 0 - 4, FOR EVERY LICENSED CHILD CARE SPOT.**



**APPROXIMATELY 85% OF ALL HUMAN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT HAPPENS BY AGE THREE.**



### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONTEXT

Colorado Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) estimates costs to employers associated with the lack of child care in Mesa County at \$32 million.

Low retention of early childhood educators is a primary barrier to providing quality ECE in Mesa County. The average wage for childcare providers in Grand Junction is \$14.95 per hour - substantially lower than the average wage across all occupations in the city (\$26.77 per hour).

MCPH has taken innovative steps to increase recruitment and provider professional development, but this has not proven to be the key to retention.

There's plenty of interest in the field as a career, however, a significant barrier is compensation and benefits as well as classroom context.

According to the 2023 Kids Count in Colorado Report, the median wage for child care educators in Mesa County was \$27,787.

Limited English-proficient providers and families face additional unique barriers, along with families and providers in more rural parts of the county that lack reliable internet.

### GOAL

**Retain the Early Childhood Education Workforce in Mesa County. There are two primary components to retention that we aim to address - appropriate compensation and support that allows the provider to focus on providing high quality care.**





# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### OBJECTIVE 1

*Research what is needed to offset child care facility costs, creating opportunities to increase staff salaries and benefits.*

#### MEASURE FOR SUCCESS

Recommendations for what specifically is needed to offset child care facility costs.

#### ACTION STEP 1: IDENTIFY FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Beginning October 1, 2023, MCPH (with support from the Center for Community Resilience at George Washington University) will identify funding sources and additional resources available to cover capital and routine expenses for child care facilities.

#### ACTION STEP 2: RESEARCH BEST PRACTICES

Beginning December 1, 2023, MCPH will work with an economist to research what is needed to offset child care facility costs.

### OBJECTIVE 2

*Increase support for children, families, and providers to create a classroom environment that encourages retention of teachers.*

#### MEASURE FOR SUCCESS

- Plan developed to increase capacity for youth behavioral health support available to teachers working with children with challenging behaviors.
- Number of referrals received by month for Grand Valley Connects (measures referrals for needed community services).
- Top identified needs by month among Grand Valley Connects clients (measures areas of community need).
- Child care searches and referrals in Bridgecare.

#### ACTION STEP 1: IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL OPTIONS FOR YOUTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Beginning October 1, 2023, MCPH will work with the Center for Community Resilience along with child care partners, to identify options for increasing capacity for youth behavioral health services for teachers working with children with challenging behaviors.

#### ACTION STEP 2: STRENGTHEN REFERRAL PATHWAYS

Beginning November 1, 2023, MCPH will work with the Center for Community Resilience along with child care partners to strengthen referral pathways for community services between families, child care providers, and service providers that address needs of families.





# STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### OBJECTIVE 3

*Build and strengthen relationships with local, state, and federal policymakers and advocacy organizations to create opportunities to influence early childhood education policy.*

#### MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

- Summary of current landscape of ECE policy work at the local, state, and federal level.
- Completed initial opportunity to educate state and local legislators on the barriers to early childhood educator retention.

#### ACTION STEP 1: RESEARCH CURRENT POLICY WORK

Beginning October 1, 2023, MCPH will work with the Center for Community Resilience to research current local, state, and federal ECE policy work as well as organizations involved and current work.

#### ACTION STEP 2: HOST POLICY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

Beginning November 1, 2023, MCPH will work with the Center for Community Resilience to plan and implement an initial opportunity to educate state and local legislators on the barriers to early childhood educator retention.





# STRATEGIC PRIORITY EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION ON COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

---

Since 2015, MCPH has coordinated the creation of a joint CHNA with local hospitals in order to produce a report that is timely, comprehensive, and doesn't burden the community or our partners with multiple assessment processes. In contrast, MCPH and local hospitals conduct independent Community Health Improvement Processes, leading to the selection of varied priorities and activities that diffuse the effectiveness of each organization.

Mesa County has since seen a concerted effort by county and city leadership, county and city agencies, and community organizations to come together to align and amplify work across the community toward shared goals.

So far, this has primarily been achieved through topic-specific coalitions of partners and agencies. Within their specific focus areas, these coalitions are doing great work and making measurable progress on community goals. Nonetheless, a 2022 Community Partners Assessment revealed that many organizations desire opportunities for better capacity sharing and more effective partnerships with other organizations.

In addition, existing partnerships and coalitions have varying approaches to community participation in their efforts. Thus the extent to which community diversity is accurately represented varies as well, especially with regards to youth, community members from demographic groups traditionally underrepresented in decision making, and the business community. MCPH aims to conduct a CHNA/CHIP process that uses best practices with robust policies and procedures for engaging diverse voices.

Across the country, several communities are implementing various models of community-wide advisory councils that seek to align efforts across broad health improvement priorities. One such model, in Nashua, New Hampshire, incorporates approximately 125 organizations in quarterly meetings to identify community health improvement priorities, goals, and objectives, and convenes workgroups of council members and community partners to identify, implement, and measure activities to spur change in the community.

MCPH intends to implement a similar model with the Community Health Improvement Advisory Council (CHIAC), to address the identified existing needs in cross-coalitional efforts and promote a community-driven approach to the assessment and improvement work required of local public health agencies and hospitals.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION ON COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT



## EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION ON COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CONTEXT

To better understand organizational capacity across the community, MCPH administered a community partners assessment in 2022 with support and guidance from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

Partner organizations identified “Staff time to participate in community health improvement meetings” as their top available resource.

Nearly 1 in 4 indicated they did not have sufficient capacity to do their work successfully and meet the needs of their clients.

They described a desire to align community work to take advantage of shared funding opportunities, administrative resources, and increase community member voice and involvement in the process.



### GOAL

Perform groundwork for building a Mesa County CHIAAC in 2024.

## OBJECTIVE 1

*Research and plan CHIAAC operations, including funding opportunities, work cycles, and timelines.*

### MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

- Identify funding opportunities.
- Clearly planned cycle timeline and document.

### ACTION STEP 1: IDENTIFY FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Beginning October 1, 2023, MCPH will research funding strategies in other CHIAAC-like systems, and research local, state, federal, and private funding possibilities. Prepare preliminary findings for Planning Committee Meeting (see Objective 2).

### ACTION STEP 2: CREATE CHNA/CHIP CYCLE TIMELINE

Beginning October 1, 2023, MCPH will create a timeline document illustrating the CHNA and CHIP cycle and the roles for each type of partner. This document will be shared with potential partners and funding organizations along with the draft operating document. Prepare draft version for Planning Committee Meeting (see Objective 2).



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION ON COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

## OBJECTIVE 2

*Build interest in a CHIAAC as a method of collaborating and unifying CHNA and CHIP efforts across local government, hospitals, community organizations, health care providers, and community members.*

### MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

- At least one hospital representative from each hospital on a planning committee.
- Create draft operating document for review; share with 25 partners.

### ACTION STEP 1: CONVENE PLANNING COMMITTEE

MCPH will host a meeting to design CHIAAC practices and procedures with hospital partners, by February 1, 2024, with at least one representative from each hospital participating.

### ACTION STEP 2: CREATE OPERATING DOCUMENT DRAFT FOR REVIEW

MCPH will communicate with partners about the coming CHIAAC plan during the CHNA development process. MCPH will draft an operating document based on input from the planning committee by May 1, 2023 to share with potential partners at the time of the CHNA launch.



**MESA COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH**

