



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Statewide Family Engagement Center to launch in Colorado

*National Center for Families Learning to lead Center alongside state and local partners*

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – The U.S. Department of Education has selected the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) to create and lead the Colorado Statewide Family Engagement Center (CO SFEC). In partnership with Colorado Education Initiative (CEI), the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition (CSPC), and the Black Parent Network (BPN), the CO SFEC will build the capacity of families, schools, and communities to address learning recovery and related impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as implement practices and systems to improve student development and family well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the need for robust, cohesive family engagement systems. [Recent Colorado data](#) confirms support for students' social, emotional, and mental health and for working with families and community remain top areas school leaders and teachers report needing additional support and professional development to lead schools effectively. Now, more than ever, coordinated and aligned family engagement efforts are needed to support learning recovery and academic achievement, particularly for children of color.

The CO SFEC priorities are aligned to the 2020 Colorado School District Community Needs Inventory and its work will support identified needs of K-3 reading loss, student mental health, disengagement of high school students, and adult education.

The model for implementing the CO SFEC reflects the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework*, the gold standard in family engagement practices. The CO SFEC will build a system that connects and integrates family engagement in education initiatives at state, regional, and local levels. A throughline across all system levels promotes parent leadership opportunities to elevate family voices and inform local decision making. This once-in-a-generation opportunity to leverage federal and state investments to design and build family partnership infrastructure will provide a national model for state COVID-19 learning recovery and catalyze a new era of effective family, school, and community partnerships.

“We’re thrilled for this opportunity to enhance family engagement efforts with key partners and stakeholders across the state of Colorado through the establishment of a Statewide Family Engagement Center,” says NCFL’s President and CEO, Dr. Felicia C. Smith. “Given the strength of Colorado’s education landscape, the state is primed for innovative and equity-centered practices advancing family engagement as a lever for improving student learning outcomes. Our partners for the CO SFEC are trusted organizations who have long been doing great work in the state. This effort will build upon their work to strengthen the bridge between family, school, and community commitments to Colorado children.”

According to the [new Latinos for Education report](#), the way schools and districts communicate achievement and assessment information to parents is an important area for growth. CEI has already begun supporting response to this need through its newly released [family assessment literacy tool](#).

“This SFEC award comes at a time when we are seeing increasing demand for deeper family partnership behaviors across Colorado, with CEI school and district partners recently identifying high-impact family and community engagement as their top area of interest for support. In addition to the more common focus for family partnership in early elementary, we are thrilled that the CO SFEC will also deepen family engagement practices related to career and college readiness,” says CEI’s President and CEO Rebecca Holmes. “CEI is honored by this opportunity to bring together the unique assets of NCFL with the Colorado partner organizations to build reciprocal bottom-up and top-down support for centering families as partners in education, with emphasis on families of color.”

The five-year grant, under the Statewide Family Engagement Centers Program (84.310A), will total \$4,773,464.

#### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM CO SFEC PARTNERS**

“We know that family engagement is critical in a child’s and school’s success. When families are deeply connected to their school and community, everyone does better. We are excited to receive this important grant to support districts in their meaningful family engagement. We look forward to partnering with the CO SFEC partners on this work.” – Dr. Katy Anthes, Commissioner, CDE

“We are thrilled to see that the federal government is investing in multipronged approaches to support families and students, and to partner with these innovative groups who are aligned in CSPC’s goals to support students from all backgrounds to thrive in our education systems.” – Lorena Garcia, Executive Director, CSPC

“We are honored to pioneer the truly equitable educational environments our Black students across Colorado deserve, in a collaborative consortium with national and statewide organizations who share Black Parent Network’s commitment to empowering and engaging Black parents as a broader audience of key stakeholders through this grant.” – Dr. Joyce Brooks, Co-founder and Facilitator, BPN

#### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILIES LEARNING**

NCFL is a national nonprofit that supports family success and well-being through education. We believe education is a shared responsibility and collaboration among families, schools, and community members that leads to powerful learning experiences. Partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and communities, NCFL has worked for over 30 years to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. NCFL’s vision is to establish coordinated and aligned family learning systems in 60 communities by 2030, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes and create more equitable communities. When parenting adults and children are engaged in learning together, the whole family benefits, contributing to a thriving, equitable community.

In 2018, NCFL was awarded two SFEC grants to lead the creation of SFECs in Arizona and Nebraska and has served as a partner for the Kentucky and Maryland/Pennsylvania SFECs. NCFL is also the co-lead of the National SFEC Network, a community of practice that promotes knowledge-sharing and collaboration among all SFEC grantees in the nation. For more information on NCFL, visit [familieslearning.org](http://familieslearning.org).

#### **ABOUT COLORADO EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

CEI is a statewide nonprofit that cultivates systems improvement and equity in Colorado’s public education system. CEI has been a primary state education partner to the Governor’s Office and CDE in Colorado’s COVID-19 emergency response leadership and support, making them uniquely positioned to partner with NCFL in

leading this effort for Colorado. CEI has built its 15-year reputation on high-quality implementation, thought leadership, and the ability to convene key stakeholders. CEI has worked with educators and community members on the ground in more than 150 urban, suburban, and rural school districts across Colorado and holds trusted experience working with diverse districts in various regions of the state. In 2021, CEI launched [FutureReadyFamilies.org](https://www.futurereadyfamilies.org), a robust website with proven tools, resources, and strategies to empower parents and caregivers as engaged partners in their child's education and development. For more information on CEI, visit [coloradoedinitiative.org](https://coloradoedinitiative.org).

#### **ABOUT COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The CDE provides leadership, resources, support, and accountability to the state's 178 school districts, 1,888 schools, over 53,000 teachers and over 3,200 administrators to help them build capacity to meet the needs of the state's approximately 905,000 public school students. CDE serves students, parents, and the general public by protecting public trust through ensuring adherence to laws, strong stewardship of public funds, and accountability for student performance. CDE's Office of Family-School-Community Partnerships sits within the Accountability and Continuous Improvement Office at CDE and was created in response to Senate Bill 13-193 Increasing Parent Involvement in Public Schools. This office leads state-level infrastructure that is leveraged through the CO SFEC, including the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and Family School Community Partnerships (FSCP) P12 Framework, partner survey, and annual promising practices report. CDE is led by the Commissioner of Education, who serves as an ex-officio member on CEI's Board of Directors. For more information on CDE, visit [cde.state.co.us](https://cde.state.co.us).

#### **ABOUT COLORADO STATEWIDE PARENT COALITION**

CSPC has been promoting equity in education for over forty years. Established by a group of parents who wanted better for their children, CSPC teaches others about their rights as parents and effective ways to support their children's early development and education. CSPC offers programs, courses, and other community resources that support schools, parents, students, and childcare providers throughout Colorado. CSPC believes every child deserves access to a high-quality education to bridge opportunity gaps by investing in educators and caregivers. CSPC has trained over 4,500 parents through its Parent Leadership Teams and over 2,800 fathers and mothers through its LOS PADRES/LAS MADRES programs. For more information on CSPC, visit [coparentcoalition.org](https://coparentcoalition.org).

#### **ABOUT BLACK PARENT NETWORK**

The purpose of BPN is to create a network of parents advocating collaboratively for Black children in schools, school districts, and other civic and state arenas to positively impact Black students through advocacy, information, and active community engagement. BPN is focused on developing Black Excellence plans modeled after work in Denver Public Schools to assist schools in being inclusive and ensuring educational equity for Black students.