

A Look Past the Cliff: Findings from the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program's Cliff Effect Pilot

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What We'll Cover

1. Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) Overview
2. Cliff Effect Pilot Program (CEPP) Overview
3. Our research
 - County implementation
 - Caregiver survey
 - Parent interviews
4. Findings and Recommendations

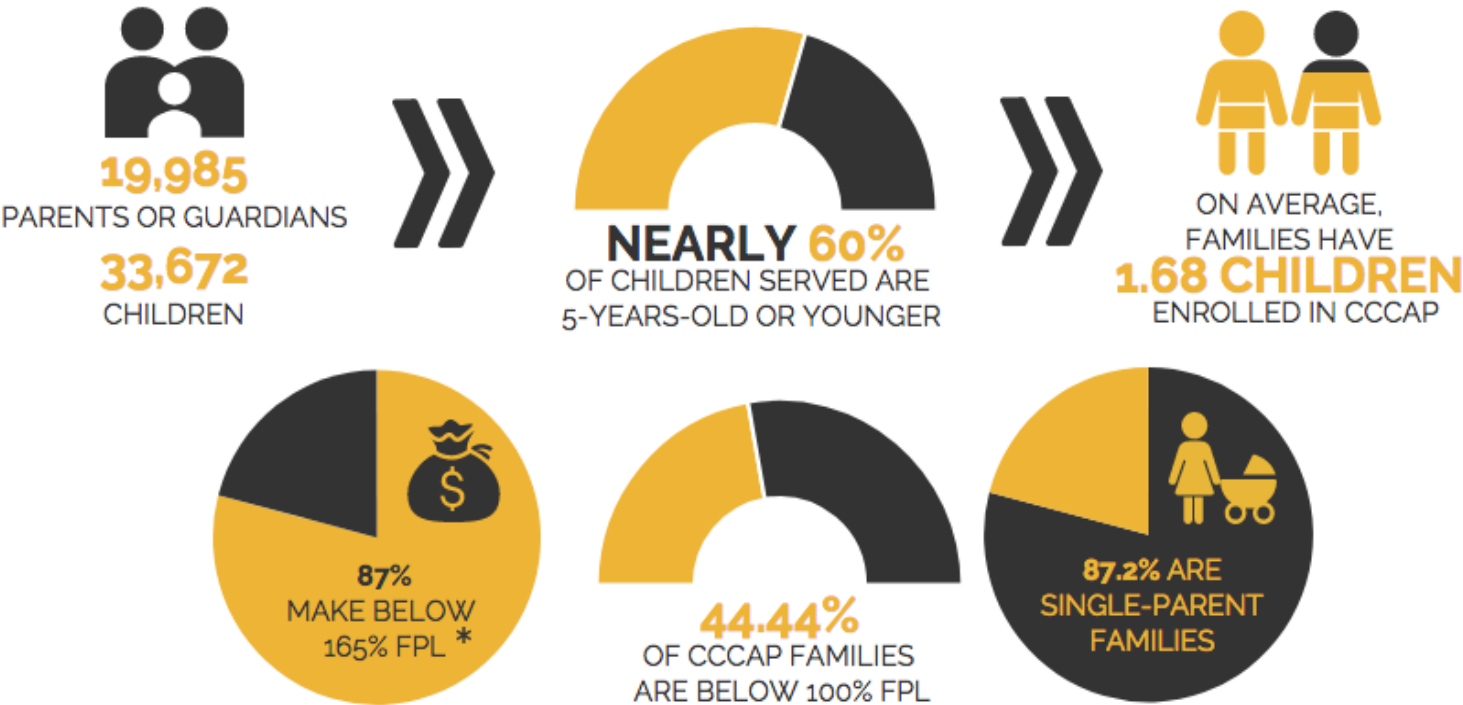
CCCAP Overview

- CCCAP appropriations
 - \$89.6 million in FY16-17
- Qualify for CCCAP
 - **Income**
 - Statewide income eligibility: 165% FPL
 - Most counties set minimums higher
 - **Eligible Activity**
 - Work, education, training, other
- Program ***only serves about 13% of eligible families***
- Most are employed and funded through low-income CCCAP (67.9%)
 - 2,129 (6.3%) were funded through Child Welfare

Overview

CCCAP KEY FACTS

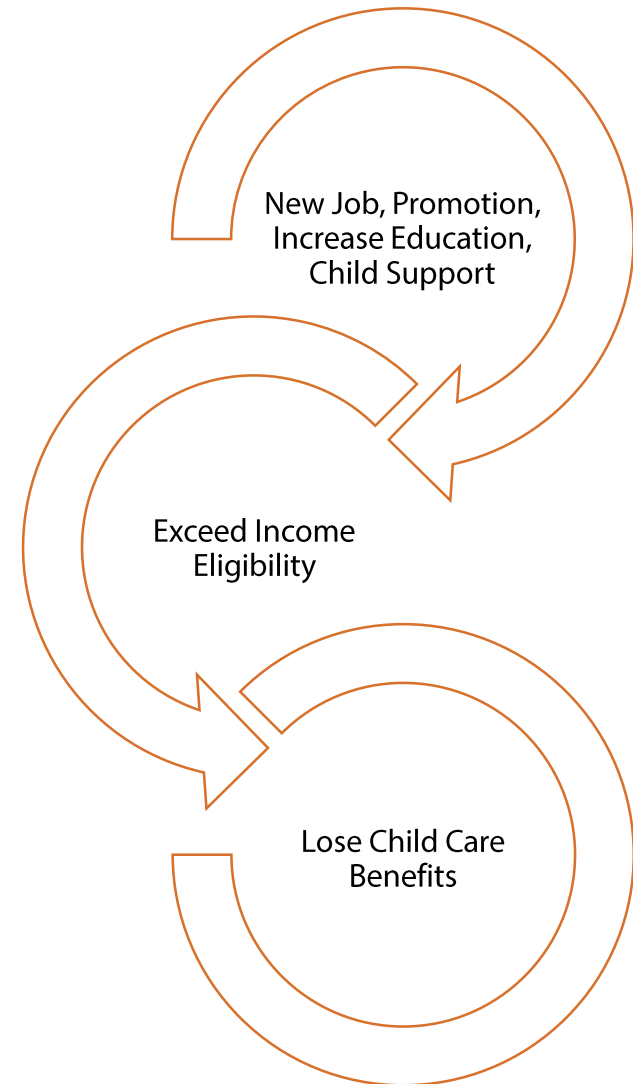
Data collected and analyzed by the Bell Policy Center between July 2015-September 2016
(All of these statistics pertain to families on low-income CCCAP program)



*that's only \$33,693 for a three-person family

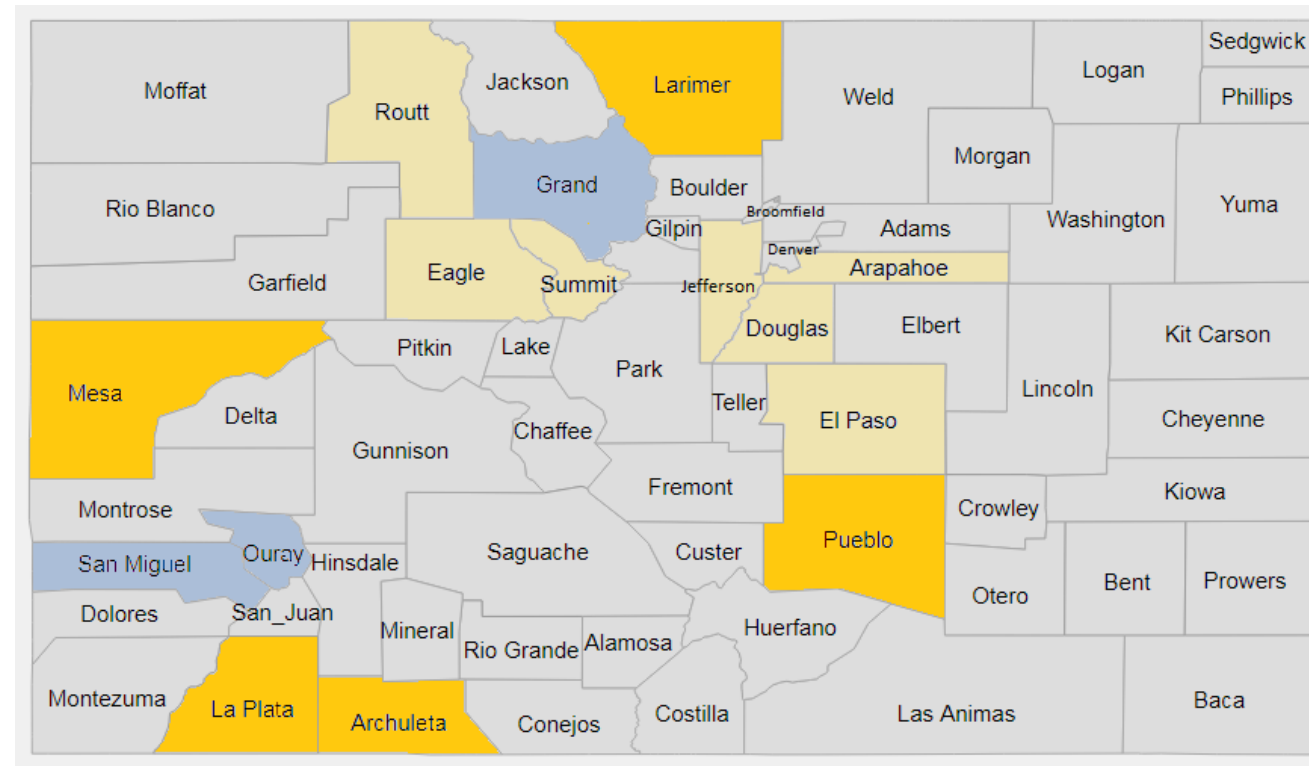
The Cliff Effect

- Sudden loss of child care benefits
 - Short- and long- term effects
- The Colorado Cliff Effect Pilot Program
 - Turn the “cliff” into a “slope”
 - Authorized in 2012
 - 15 counties



Program Implementation: Design Elements

- Variation in income eligibility
- Co-pay increases
- Redetermination
- Opt in or out
- Communication styles

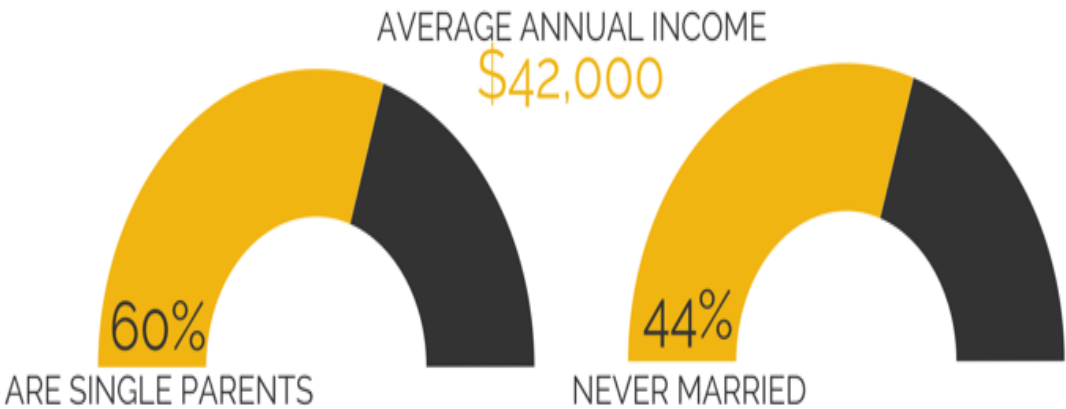


Program Implementation: County Insights

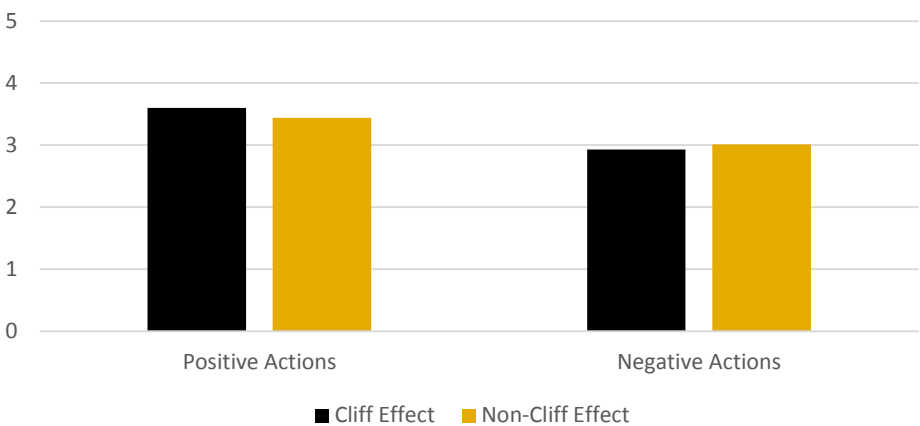
- Flexibility versus consistency
- CEPP is not well-publicized
- CEPP impacted by CCCAP evolution
- CEPP helps families but high cost of living, low wages hinder economic mobility
- Non-financial supports are needed in addition to child care

Economic Behavior and Perceptions of the Program: Parent Insights

OF ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENTS...



Differences in Economic Behaviors
by Group

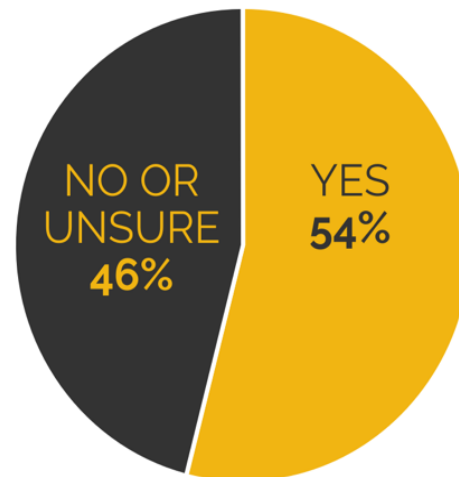


Economic Behavior and Perceptions of the Program: Parent Insights

CEPP Mechanism of Change

Understanding/Being Aware of the CEPP

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE
CLIFF EFFECT PILOT PROGRAM (CEPP)?



Parent Interviews

1. Families are worried about the cliff
2. Parents lack familiarity with CEPP
3. CEPP is helping but wide variation in impact
4. Communication, information and transparency matter
5. Additional interventions could make a big difference

Study Limitations

1. Small sample; not representative
2. Not a randomized controlled trial
3. Long study period; several changes occurred over time
4. No provider input

Findings and Recommendations

1. **Seek out strategies** to refine CEPP; ameliorate the cliff.
 - Reduce parent worry
 - Full scale evaluation
2. Families welcome assistance from CEPP, **anecdotal evidence it enables greater economic mobility.**

Findings and Recommendations

3. Share information and materials about CEPP and county-specific guidelines

- Share early before the cliff approaches and make publicly available

4. CEPP should link copay increases with household income increases

- Incomes rise enough to qualify for the program, but not enough to keep up with the periodic copay increases

Findings and Recommendations

5. CEPP and CCCAP may benefit from other **implementation consistencies**

- And from the counties learning from each other.

6. We must **strengthen public investment in child care** for working families.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Which copay strategies result in better retention rates: what best turns the cliff into a slope?
2. How can technology improve communication with families?
3. What strategies reduce parent worry? Which pieces of the program alleviate worry?
4. How likely is it that a family could be walked down the cliff, given employment trends?
5. Does the cliff effect result in more stable, high-quality child care?




"I got a raise and (went over). I was also told I would lose Medicaid. Obviously you panic. I had to go from paying \$480/month to paying \$1000. That almost took up everything I had. But then I was able to enroll in the pilot."



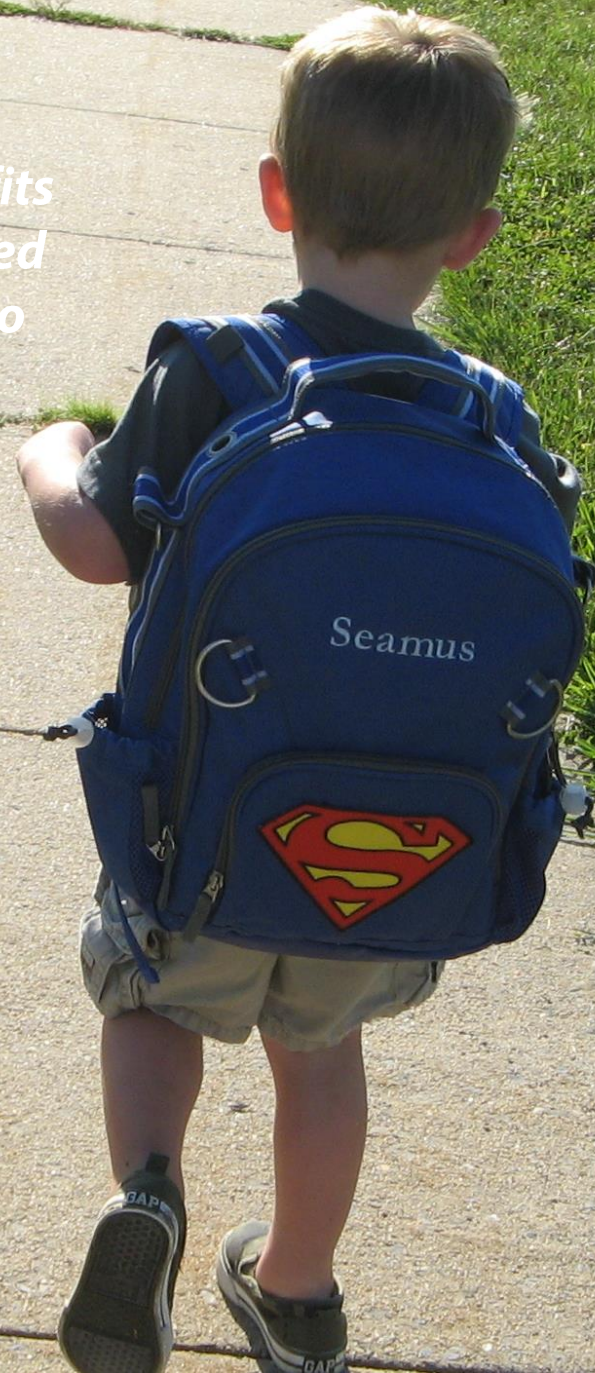
"The increased co-pays have been fair and reasonable. It increased quite a bit, but so did my pay...I would like for it to be continued, even if I have to increase my co-pay."

"That's the biggest thing about the Cliff Effect - it is eliminating parent stress. That's everything. That makes us be more successful."



***“I wasn’t scared when I was
on the pilot. But I didn’t
understand it completely
and that goes into why I lost
it...”***

"Knowing what I know now, I probably would have (taken actions to stay eligible). I had never even applied for benefits until I got to Colorado. When I realized I was being penalized for working holidays, etc... it was disheartening. I moved to Texas because my son can start school here whereas in Colorado they don't offer four-year-old pre-k. That immediately saved me \$400/month."



A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black t-shirt, is holding a young child. The child is wearing a blue shirt and has their hand near their mouth. They are in a dimly lit room, possibly a living area, with a doorway in the background showing a room with pink curtains. A quote is overlaid on the right side of the image.

(Ultimately) I couldn't go backwards. I would have had to take a huge pay cut at work. And that is just ridiculous."

Connect with us

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