



COLORADO CENTER
on LAW & POLICY

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**Legislation from CCLP
and our partners:**

- Renew the Child Care Tax Credit for those earning less than \$25,000/year
- “Chance-to-compete” legislation for Coloradans with criminal records
- Extended notice periods for tenants without leases
- Consumer information about for-profit occupational schools
- Child care for Coloradans seeking education and training

**Non-legislative advocacy
work, research and projects**

- Employment and training for homeless Coloradans
- Support services for those seeking training and employment

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Legislative & Policy Preview 2017: Family Economic Security

The Colorado Center on Law and Policy advances the health and economic security of low-income Coloradans through research, education, advocacy and litigation. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we work with a variety of stakeholders to develop and support legislation and policies that achieve our mission. We focus on addressing systemic barriers to economic self-sufficiency that will produce real results.

This year, CCLP will collaborate with national partners to protect the interests of low-income Coloradans in federal policy discussions. Since Congress may delegate additional authority to states regarding critical programs and services, we are prepared to work with partner organizations to ensure that decision-makers in Colorado make choices that are in the best interests of struggling families throughout the state.

Below is CCLP’s legislative and policy agenda for 2017:

Legislation from CCLP and our partners

Renew the Colorado Child Care Tax Credit for low-income workers

In 2014, CCLP championed a successful bill to introduce a child-care tax credit for workers earning less than \$25,000 a year. Our bill established an alternative calculation method for those who did not qualify for child-care tax credits because they earned too little to owe federal income tax. Since the passage of the bill, over 32,000 families have claimed the credit, providing a total of \$4.9 million to help defray the cost of child care for low-income working parents. The current law expires on Jan. 1, 2018, so we will fight for renewal of this important tax credit.

“Chance-to-compete” legislation

Society expects people to work, pay restitution and support their families after they’ve been incarcerated. Unfortunately, many Coloradans with criminal records experience unemployment, food insecurity and housing instability -- fueling poverty and recidivism rates.

To address this problem, CCLP is again running legislation to address preliminary barriers to employment by prohibiting most employers from asking about past criminal records on preliminary job applications. The bill has garnered support from a diverse coalition that includes 45 different nonprofits, faith-based organizations, labor groups and businesses.

Extend notice periods for tenants without leases

In Colorado, a tenant who is renting without a lease is only assured seven-days of

notice before being required to vacate their home or pay higher rent. Similarly, tenants are only required to give seven days of notification to landlords before ending their tenancy.

Only two other states have notice periods this short. The current notification period presents an extreme challenge for tenants in Colorado's tight housing market. For families with children, older adults and people with disabilities, finding new housing can be nearly impossible in a short period of time. CCLP will run a bill to extend the notification period from seven to 28 days. This bill would not change the three-day eviction process for non-payment of rent or non-compliance with a lease. It also would not apply in cases when there is a lease.

Transparent consumer information for students of for-profit schools and training programs

By 2020, 74 percent of all jobs in Colorado are projected to require some level of post-secondary training. Analysts estimate that Colorado will need to increase post-secondary credentials by 2 percent annually to meet workforce needs in the future. For-profit occupational schools are an important component of post-secondary education. However, these programs tend to be more expensive than community colleges, are often unlikely to lead to gainful employment and frequently result in high debt loads and student-loan defaults. Nationally, the surge in student loan defaults in the last decade was largely concentrated among relatively older, low-income students who attended for-profit colleges. Given this context, it's important that students and their families have the best information available so they can make informed decisions about what types of training to pursue and what programs will prepare them for gainful employment. The Skills2Compete Colorado Coalition, led by CCLP, will run legislation requiring prospective students to receive more information about educational outcomes, such as completion rates, total costs, estimated debt load and average starting salaries for students. The legislation will also call for the state to develop comparative website to help students make informed decisions when investing in a secondary education.

Child care for education and training

Nationally, 26 percent of post-secondary students are parents. Many more parents are not able to participate in employment and training programs because of child-care obligations.

Some of the highest poverty rates are among parents of young children. Advancing a parent's education level could improve employment prospects, increase a family's income and help a young child's development and future outlook. Currently, the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program is not equipped to meet the child care needs of parents who attend night classes or classes for short blocks of time. CCLP is developing a bill that would create an interagency and community task force to assess available resources, improve coordination and identify gaps in meeting the child-care needs of parents seeking to upgrade their skills for today's job market.

Other legislation we expect to support

CCLP supports Gov. John Hickenlooper's funding requests for affordable housing. The governor has asked for \$12 million in marijuana tax dollars to build 1,200 new permanent supportive housing units in five years for chronically homeless individuals. The allotment also will cover the cost of "rapid rehousing" units for individuals experiencing episodic homelessness. In addition, the governor has asked for \$4 million of marijuana tax revenue to provide housing vouchers for people with behavioral-health issues. CCLP supports these requests as well as a plan to appropriate \$2 million per year from the general fund for the Housing Development Grant Fund, which would cover the cost of 250 affordable housing units for Coloradans who are currently spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing.

CCLP believes manufactured housing plays a critical role in promoting and preserving affordable housing in Colorado. In recent years, construction standards for manufactured housing have improved to prevent depreciation -- making manufactured housing an investment that could provide long-term shelter for low-income Coloradans. CCLP is helping to

craft legislation that could make it easier for owners of manufactured homes to establish resident-owned communities that would be more secure and less expensive than other residential alternatives.

We also support the Bell Policy Center's legislation to conduct an actuarial study that could lead to the establishment of individual retirement saving accounts for those without access to other retirement savings plans. The shortfall in retirement savings is a danger both to individuals who could retire unprepared and for our state which likely would struggle to meet the needs of a growing older population that runs out of retirement savings. We also support the Bell Policy Center's efforts to prevent financial institutions from raising interest rates on short-term consumer loans that could potentially hurt low-income Coloradans.

Non-legislative advocacy work, research and projects

Employment and training for homeless Coloradans

Many Coloradans become homeless after losing a job because it's nearly impossible to pay rent without sufficient income and savings. To further complicate matters, it's much more difficult to search for employment without stable housing. In metro Denver, more than 30 percent of those experiencing homelessness have worked in the past month. But in today's economy, the reliability and consistency of work hours may vary -- particularly for those with the lowest-wage jobs.

Thanks to the generous support of the Butler Family Fund, CCLP spent the past year interviewing workforce centers, programs that serve people who have experienced homelessness, and other program staff in the education and workforce area. We will release a report and recommendations on how systems providing education and employment and those working with individuals who are homeless or have other barriers to employment can partner more effectively across systems. The report will highlight some best practices across the state. We hope to be able to continue this work on an intensive basis, but have incorporated the concern into the Skills2Compete Coalition's agenda.

Support services for those seeking training and employment

Many Coloradans need support services to succeed in education or training programs, or to successfully obtain and retain employment. Such services include case management, coaching, mentoring, child care, legal assistance, transportation, and financial or housing assistance. This priority was identified by Skills2Compete member organizations. We are researching the resources and gaps in the availability of support services critical for success. Skills2Compete will continue to explore ways to bridge the gaps in support services for Coloradans seeking to improve their lives.

Collaboration to improve participation in safety net programs

Together with Hunger Free Colorado, CCLP is working on strategies to streamline access to core safety net programs available to low-income Coloradans (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP, WIC and TANF). Five other states are participating in this effort. While Colorado has outperformed other states when it comes to Medicaid access, SNAP and WIC participation lag behind national averages. Colorado ranks near the bottom in terms of SNAP access, with an estimated 41 percent of the eligible population not enrolled in the program. Through administrative advocacy and public-will building, CCLP and Hunger Free are working to improve SNAP and WIC access, with an eye to other programs that tend not to reach the entirety of the population they aim to serve.