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**VISIONARY LEADERS FUEL ADVANCES IN  
OPPORTUNITY FOR COLORADO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**  
*Aspen Institute names Inaugural Colorado Children and Families Fellows*

**Washington, DC, May 16, 2017** – The Aspen Institute announced the inaugural class of its Colorado Children and Families Health and Human Services Fellowship. The Fellowship invests in visionary leaders committed to making Colorado the best place to have a child and sustain a healthy, thriving family.

“All children deserve a healthy, happy start in life,” said Lucy Ana Walton, co-founder of the Ben and Lucy Ana Walton Fund at the Walton Family Foundation and the recently launched Zoma Foundation. “This Fellowship is part of our investment in Colorado’s children to help them and their families build strong futures, free from neglect and with the awareness and ease of access to supports and services they need to succeed in life.”

"This investment in leaders in rural and urban counties across the state is a smart way to strengthen the systems that serve our communities," said Governor John Hickenlooper. "We look forward to seeing the impact this inaugural class will have on Colorado children and families."

For bios and photos of all 20 outstanding leaders, visit <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org>

These leaders are on the front lines of new solutions to transform the culture and systems that serve children and families in Colorado. Among their strategies:

- Ensuring high quality early learning and health opportunities;
- Reimagining the child welfare system;
- Addressing the root causes of health disparities to improve outcomes for young children and families;
- Developing a comprehensive approach to helping families reach their goals, including strong education and workforce systems;
- Transforming trauma assessment and care to support family healing and the prevention of future maltreatment;
- Building a new culture within human services focused on serving families coupled with smarter service delivery across systems to improve lives.

*The Fellows reflect the diversity and talent of Colorado and significant opportunities to invest in children and families:*

- Lead health and human services systems in 4 rural and urban counties, serving 1.4 million Coloradans
- Steward more than \$1.2 billion in public resources
- Direct the state's programs in Medicaid, early childhood, and public health
- Head policy, research, and early childhood organizations
- 35% people of color
- 12 women, 8 men

“It is a privilege to bring the Aspen Institute’s values-based leadership approach back to its roots in Colorado, where it all started,” said Institute President and CEO Walter Isaacson. “More importantly, this Fellowship is a critical investment in advancing opportunity and equality in America for the children and families who need it the most.”

“The Colorado Children and Families Fellows are diverse, entrepreneurial leaders implementing bold ideas to change the lives of young children and their families throughout Colorado,” said Anne Mosle, vice president, the Aspen Institute, and executive director, Ascend at the Aspen Institute. “Too many families are struggling; the Aspen Institute is committed to ensuring that all children have the chance to reach their full potential.”

The Colorado Children and Families Fellowship builds on the best of the Aspen Institute leadership tradition. Fellows work with inspirational leaders; participate in signature Institute convenings and platforms; tap powerful networks of social justice; and carry out action plans that advance their work on behalf of children and families. **The Fellowship is made possible through the generous support of the Ben and Lucy Ana Fund of the Walton Family Foundation.**

*2017 Aspen Institute Children and Families Fellows:*

**Phyllis Albritton**, Director, Office of Economic Security, Colorado Department of Human Services

**Erin Brown**, Executive Director, Office of Children’s Affairs, City and County of Denver

**Matthew Dodson**, Director, Archuleta County Department of Human Services

**Verónica Figoli**, President and CEO, Denver Public Schools Foundation

**Tony Gherardini**, Deputy Executive Director of Operations, Colorado Department of Human Services

**Tista Ghosh**, Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Director, Public Health Programs, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

**Gretchen Hammer**, Medicaid Director, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

**Nikki Hatch**, Regional Administrator, Region 8, Administration of Children and Families

**Bill Jaeger**, Vice President, Early Childhood Initiatives, Colorado Children’s Campaign

**Deidre Johnson**, CEO and Executive Director, The Center for African-American Health

**Liane Jollon**, Executive Director, San Juan Basin Public Health

**Mark Kling**, Executive Director, Family Resource Center Association

**Jeff Kuhr**, Executive Director, Mesa County Health Department

**Don Mares**, Executive Director, Denver Department of Human Services

**Michael Niyompong**, Chief Operating Officer, Clayton Early Learning

**Stephanie Seng**, Director, Center for Marriage and Family Therapy and Child Trauma and Resilience Assessment Center, Colorado State University

**Mary Anne Snyder**, Director, Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Department of Human Services

**Cheryl Ternes**, Director, Arapahoe County Department of Human Services

**Stephanie Villafuerte**, Child Protection Ombudsman of Colorado

**Scott Wasserman**, President, The Bell Policy Center

**Ascend at the Aspen Institute** is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success, economic security, and health and well-being. We embrace a commitment to racial equity and a gender lens. For more information, visit <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org>

**The Aspen Institute** is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute is based in Washington, DC; Aspen, Colorado; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has offices in New York City and an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org)

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