



Mission Statement
Pueblo Early Childhood Council is a diverse, active network that collaborates and advocates to enrich and strengthen the lives of children, families, and the community.

Meeting Minutes

Date:	January 26, 2026
Time:	11:00 AM -12:30 PM
Location:	Hybrid via Zoom (SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor)
Recorded By:	Ryan Montoya

Attendees:	
Appel, Katrina: CO Blue Sky	Keenedy, Arlene: SCC1
Arellano, Paula: Children First/PECC	Lopez, Emilee: CPLC
Bellavia, Rebecca: Children First/PECC	Rodriguez, Brenda: ESCCC (<i>Virtual</i>)
Bellavia, Joe: Children First/PECC	Montoya, Ryan: Children First/PECC
Bermudez, Darlene: D60	Rusk, Josette: SSCCS
Flores, Pam: PDPHE	Rogers, Angie: ELV (<i>Virtual</i>)
Gonzales, Lisa: University of Colorado	Shehorn, Angie: Children First/PECC
Guy, Matt: SECC	Wilburn, Gina: DHS (<i>Virtual</i>)
Hall, Darla: Children First/PECC	Lopez-Ferguson, Gina: Caring4Coloado
Johnson, Hunter: Children First/PECC	Rogers, Angie: ELV
Lira, Tess	
Medina, Nancy:	Palma, Mari: ECEMES
Rodriguez, Brenda: ESCCC	Pedro, Berlinda: OJC
Rusk, Josette: SSCC1	Torres, Monica: CPLC
Samora, Rita: DHS	Martinez, Raelynn: CPLC

Agenda

Introductions:	Meeting called to order by Angie at 11:00 am.
Additions to Agenda:	None
Approval of Minutes:	November-Approved

New Business

Lisa Gonzales: University of Colorado (WELL [Well-being of the EC Workforce in Low Resource Locations])

1. Program Overview

- Introduction of WELL (Well-Being of the EC Workforce in Low Resource Locations).
- Builds on the previous Cultural Wellness in Preschools program (8 years in Pueblo).
- Previous SNAP-funded programming ended in September.
- New 5-year grant was secured through the Anschutz Family Foundation.
- Program aims to reduce burnout and turnover among Early Childhood Education (ECE) staff.
- Focus includes all ECE staff (teachers, janitorial, kitchen, bus staff, etc.).

2. Background & Need

- Initial 5-year federal funding through Administration for Children and Families.
- Early data (2021 surveys) showed:
 - ECE staff reported 5 days of poor physical health/month (vs. 3 in general population).
 - ECE staff reported 7 days of poor mental health/month (vs. 4 in general population).
- Identified needs:
 - Sleep support
 - Stress management
 - Positive coping strategies
 - Physical activity
 - Staff connection and appreciation

3. Program Goals

- Promote mental health and well-being for early childhood professionals.
- Reduce burnout and turnover.
- Improve quality of care and children's social-emotional outcomes.
- Expand reach across Pueblo, Denver, and Weld County.
- Address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in young children.

**Agency
Highlight**

4. Program Structure (Multi-Level Approach)

A. Organizational Level

- **Formation of center-based Wellness Teams (3–5 members).**
- **Menu of best practices with funding support.**
- **Examples:**
 - **Cozy break spaces (“cozy corners”)**
 - **Ice/tea makers**
 - **Wellness equipment (massagers, books, tablets)**
 - **Dedicated staff break chairs**

B. Interpersonal Level

- **Workplace wellness challenges (sleep bingo, walking challenges, water challenges).**
- **Encourages participation at any stage of readiness.**
- **Incentives provided for participation (not completion-based).**
- **Focus on team bonding and motivation.**

C. Individual Level

- **Free texting campaign (2–3 messages/week).**
 - **Topic-specific (sleep, stress, physical activity).**
 - **Localized messaging (Pueblo-specific resources).**
 - **Optional participation; cancel anytime.**
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5. Professional Development

- **Three main topics (1-hour PD each):**
 - 1. Sleep (current focus; journaling, sleep hygiene)**
 - 2. Stress Management**
 - 3. Physical Activity**
 - **Flexible scheduling (day/evening).**
 - **Certificates provided.**
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6. “Facts & Snacks” Touchpoints

- **On-site engagement activities (weekly or biweekly).**
 - **Examples:**
 - **Tea-making station (sleep support)**
 - **Self-massage with tennis balls (stress relief)**
 - **Healthy snacks and mini wellness activities**
 - **No cost to centers.**
 - **Emphasis on relationship-building and appreciation.**
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7. Pilot & Timeline

- **Current pilot: January–July.**
 - **Full cycle begins in August.**
 - **Program runs August–May annually.**
 - **Free participation for centers.**
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8. Eligibility & Expansion

- **Currently open to childcare centers (not homes at this time).**
 - **Open to partnerships with organizations that support centers.**
 - **Flexible implementation based on center needs.**
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9. Key Themes from Discussion

- **Staff often feel invisible and unappreciated.**
 - **Small gestures (recognition, thank-yous, incentives) significantly improve morale.**
 - **Relationship-building is central to program success.**
 - **Rural communities like Pueblo have high need.**
 - **Directors value structured wellness activities to support staff.**
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10. Next Steps

- **Centers interested in joining will begin in August.**
- **Outreach ongoing to expand reach in Pueblo.**
- **Presenter available for follow-up and partnership discussions.**

SECC Update	<u>Matt Guy</u> 1. Purpose of Presentation • Share findings from surveys examining suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary removals in early childhood programs. • “Involuntary removals” includes: ○ Formal suspensions/expulsions ○ Early pickups for behavioral reasons ○ “Not the right fit” determinations • Goal: Gather objective data to better understand disconnects between providers and families and improve supports. 2. Survey Overview Provider Surveys • Conducted annually for 4 years (fall). • 2025 survey: 17 programs responded (all completed). • Programs ranged from small homes (4 children) to large centers (200+). • Questions included enrollment, behaviors observed, family engagement, and resource use. Parent Surveys • Conducted Spring and Fall 2025. • Fall 2025: 48 families (approx. 69–70 children). • Majority of children ages 3–4. • Family types: ○ ~2/3 two-parent households ○ ~25% single-parent households ○ Some foster families 3. Communication Between Providers & Families • 80–90% of providers report regular communication with families. • ~75% of providers report parents are engaged. • Parent responses align, indicating generally strong communication. • Overall: Positive interaction reported on both sides. 4. Behavioral Concerns Reported
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Most common behaviors (consistent across years):

- Hurting others (e.g., biting)
- Difficulty following routines
- Frequent crying
- Not sitting still / attention challenges
- Breaking equipment (newly reported)
- Some reports of self-harm or limited peer interaction
- Two providers reported problematic sexual behaviors (new finding)

Behaviors largely align with typical developmental patterns for 3–4-year-olds.

5. Early Pickups

Providers

- 3 of 17 providers report sending children home for behavior.
- Occurs monthly at most.

Parents

- ~25% reported early pickup in past 12 months.
 - Only 3 families reported behavior-related early pickups.
 - Most early pickups due to illness or other routine reasons.
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6. "Not the Right Fit"

Providers

- 2 reported asking families not to return.

Parents

- 4 families reported being told their child was "not the right fit."
 - 3 cited lack of program resources.
 - 1 stated child "didn't fit."

Discussion highlighted concern that resources are available but may not be fully accessed or understood by programs.

7. Formal Suspensions & Expulsions

Providers

- 2 providers reported formal suspensions/expulsions in 2025.
- Small but consistent numbers over past years (1–3 annually).

Parents

- 3 families reported formal suspension/expulsion.
- Occurred across program types (school district, home, faith-based).
- One cited teacher conflict; others gave no reason.

Note: Those reporting formal suspension did not report early pickups, suggesting possible data disconnect.

8. Resource Use

- 60% of providers report using outside behavioral resources.
 - Down from 100% (2024)
 - Up from 25% (2022)
 - Indicates opportunity to increase awareness and usage of available supports.
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9. Key Findings

- Involuntary removals are occurring, but at relatively low reported rates.
 - Parents and providers report similar rates.
 - Most early pickups are illness-related.
 - Behavioral concerns remain consistent across years.
 - Strong communication is reported overall.
 - Disconnect exists between reported data and community stories.
 - Potential communication gaps around referrals, interventions, and available resources.
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10. Discussion Highlights

- Communication around behavioral concerns can be sensitive.
- Parents may perceive referrals or early pickups as rejection.
- Stigma may affect acceptance of early intervention services.
- Suggestion to include future survey questions about:
 - Early intervention referrals
 - Specific resources used by providers

	11. Next Steps • Coalition considering additional survey in Spring for third data point. • Possible refinement of questions regarding early intervention and referrals. • Continue data collection to identify trends and gaps.
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UPK Update	<u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u> 1. Regional Support Changes (Effective February 1) • Regional specialists currently supporting Ryan and team will no longer serve the region. • Specialists will transition to state-level quality work (details pending). • UPK support questions must now be submitted to one statewide monitored email address. • Anticipated delays possible due to statewide volume. • Providers encouraged to submit urgent questions before February 1 if possible. 2. Funding & Structural Changes (Effective July 1) Department of Early Childhood Funding Merger • Funding sources for Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) are merging with Early Childhood Council funding. • Funding will follow the council structure. Impact on Current Role • As of July 1: ○ No longer serving as LCO for six Southeast Colorado counties. ○ Will serve as UPK support via contract for five Southeast Colorado counties. ○ Will continue UPK support for Baca County. • Scope of support will depend on contracts with individual Early Childhood Councils. • Level of service may change depending on finalized scope of work. 3. Scope of Work & Funding Timeline • State to release funding amounts and scope of work mid-March. • Local response due by April 1. • Contracts to be finalized by July 1.
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	4. Budget Proposal Update • Department requested additional UPK funding in state budget proposal. • If approved: ○ Funds will go directly to providers. ○ Intended to support: ▪ Increased enrollment ▪ More children eligible for extended hours • No additional funds allocated to LCOs. 5. Impact on Providers & Families • No anticipated changes to providers or families in terms of service delivery. • Changes primarily internal and administrative. 6. Questions & Follow-Up • Providers encouraged to reach out with questions. • More legislative updates to follow later in the agenda. •
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Provider Spotlight Initiative	<u>Rebecca Bellavia-Children First</u> 1. Overview • Introduction of the Provider Spotlight Initiative (launched in January). • Purpose: Support and recognize early childhood providers in the community. • Goal: Highlight providers' accomplishments, special programs, and milestones. • Initiative discussed previously at the November meeting. 2. Program Details • Spotlight aims to feature: ○ Two home providers ○ One center ○ Each month (as submissions allow) • Participation is voluntary.
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- **Providers complete a short questionnaire.**
 - **Questionnaire sent monthly due to high email volume.**
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3. Spotlight Content

- **Providers may share:**
 - **Special activities or events**
 - **Staff achievements**
 - **Milestones (e.g., new licensing)**
 - **Unique program offerings**
 - **Highlight section is customizable; providers choose what to share.**
 - **Flyers created for each spotlighted provider.**
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4. Distribution

- **Flyers:**
 - **Posted in the office glass display case.**
 - **Shared in meeting follow-up email.**
 - **Posted on social media (with provider permission).**
 - **Shared with providers for use at their program or on their own social media/website.**
 - **Encouragement for community members to personally congratulate highlighted providers.**
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5. January Spotlight Recipients

- **YMCA of Pueblo**
 - **Serves children ages 1–12.**
 - **Offers occasional evening/weekend programming.**
 - **Danielle Newbold**
 - **Newly licensed in November.**
 - **Located near Mineral Palace Park (north side of Pueblo).**
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6. Next Steps

- **Ongoing initiative contingent on provider participation.**
- **Providers encouraged to complete and return questionnaire when emailed.**
- **Community encouraged to recognize and support highlighted providers.**

Screenings Update	<u>Ryan Montoya: Children First/PECC</u> 1. Upcoming Screening Date • Next screening scheduled for February 6 (first Friday of the month). 2. Services Available • Developmental screenings (ASQ) • Hearing screenings • Vision screenings 3. Availability • Appointments are still open. • Providers encouraged to refer children who may need screenings. 4. Contact Information • Families should call 719-549-3407 (Ryan's direct line) to schedule.
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CCDF Freeze	<u>Angie Shehorn</u> Meeting Minutes – CCDF/CCAP Freeze Update Presenter: Angie & Gina Wilburn 1. Federal Update A federal judge extended the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) for an additional two weeks. A Preliminary Injunction (PI) request is still pending in court.
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Lawsuit filed collectively by five states' Attorneys General.

Awaiting court decision; outcome may end funding freeze if ruled unlawful.

2. CCAP Reimbursement Status

CCAP reimbursements will continue through February 28.

Providers will receive payment for services provided through the end of February.

February 6 referenced in communication relates to TRO extension date—not end of funding.

Payments will continue into March (due to two-week payment lag).

3. Non-CCAP (Administrative) Funding

Previously expected to end February 15.

Now extended through March 15.

4. Enrollment Freeze

Enrollment freeze remains in effect through 2026.

Current data (Pueblo County):

~117 contracted providers

~643 children impacted

~294 individuals on enrollment freeze list

Recertifications:

17 renewal notices sent

2 returned

15 pending (must submit by February 28 to retain place)

Late submissions move to bottom of waitlist

5. Provider Communication & Concerns

Some providers had notified families about charging private pay due to uncertainty.

Clarification: Providers will be reimbursed through February 28 and should not charge families for February CCAP-covered care.

Communication challenges noted due to rapidly changing federal decisions.

County directed not to post public updates due to frequent changes.

6. Related Programs Impacted

Colorado Works (TANF) also affected.

TANF funding extended for February only at this time.

7. Key Concerns

Ongoing month-to-month uncertainty.

Financial instability for providers, families, and county staff.

Administrative challenges caused by fluctuating federal decisions.

Hope that court ruling will fully restore funding rather than continue short-term extensions.

8. Action Items

Providers should:

Monitor email updates.

Avoid charging CCAP families for February-covered care.

Direct concerned families to contact the county office.

	County will send updates via email as new information becomes available.
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Virtual Platform Options	<u>Angie Shehorn: Children First/PECC</u> 1. Zoom Platform Changes • Current Zoom link will expire mid-February due to limitations with the free account through Pueblo Community College. • Issue is being addressed in coordination with Pueblo Community College. • Topic tabled for now while solution is finalized. 2. February Meeting Update • The February PECC meeting will use a new Zoom link. • Updated link will be sent out in advance. • Attendees should not use the current link for future meetings.
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CDEC Budget	<u>Angie Shehorn: Children First/PECC</u> Meeting Summary – Legislative Updates Presenter: Angie 1. Senate Bill 26-020 – Child Care Provider License & Quality Sponsors: • Scott Bright (Sponsor) • Matt Ball (Co-sponsor) • Emily Sirota (Co-sponsor) Overview: This bill focuses on child care licensing processes and quality improvements. Key components include: • Provisional Licensing for Zoning Delays Allows providers to receive a provisional license if zoning approval is delayed. • Increased Use of PDIS Verification Licensing specialists will rely more heavily on the state’s Professional Development Information System (PDIS) to verify: ○ Staff training ○ Credentials
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- Required documentation

This reduces the burden on providers who currently print large volumes of documentation for site visits.

- **Additional Licensing Updates**

Amendments are already being discussed, so the bill will continue evolving as it moves through session.

2. Senate Bill 26-019 – Merging LCOs and Early Childhood Councils

Sponsors:

- **Matt Ball**
- **Scott Bright**
- **Emily Sirota**

Purpose:

To merge:

- Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs)
- Early Childhood Councils

into a **single streamlined governance structure** under Early Childhood Councils.

Rationale:

Colorado's local child care systems are described as:

- Fragmented
- Overtaxed
- Underfunded

Goals of the Bill:

- Create a "one-stop shop" for families
- Streamline local governance
- Reduce administrative duplication
- Funnel more funding directly to services
- Preserve local voice and control

Important Notes:

- Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) were initially included but removed after it was confirmed they are no longer in statute (since 2017).
- Three standalone LCOs currently exist and are reviewing next steps.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM

- This bill would formally place the merger into statute.

3. Potential Upcoming Legislation (Not Yet Introduced)

There is discussion about a bill that would:

- Remove the requirement for school districts to go through state child care licensing (including preschool and school-age programming)

This proposal is still in development and has not yet been introduced.

Next Steps

- Angie will continue tracking legislation.
- Questions can be directed to her directly or brought to the Policy Committee.
- Additional updates will be shared as bills are introduced or amended.

Next Meeting
February 23, 2026 HYBRID-Virtually via Zoom
In Person Meeting at TLC @ PCC, 1000 Minnequa Avenue, Pueblo, CO 81004 SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor Join Zoom Meeting https://cccs-edu.zoom.us/j/83649820790?pwd=UXeIPStoXkRk2FQBy3m7aIPVM4555u.1 Meeting ID: 836 4982 0790 Passcode: 767195 Local Resources Children First Childcare Connections – www.childrenfirstco.org Pueblo County Childhood Resources https://county.pueblo.org/public-health/pueblo-county-childhood-resources Statewide Resources www.coloradoshines.com (Colorado Shines) https://www.coloradoshinespdis.com/s/login/ (Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System – PDIS) https://earlylearningco.org/ (Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines)

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan Montoya