



Pueblo Early  
Childhood Council

# MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 24, 2025 HYBRID VIA ZOOM

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## 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.

### Attendance:

Annette Alcon-CPLC  
Katrina Appel-Colorado Blue Sky  
Paula Arellano-PECC/Children First  
Joe Bellavia-PECC/Children First  
Rebecca Bellavia-PECC/Children First  
Frankie Boone-DHS/CCCAP  
Rhonda Duskey-Kochis-CPLC  
Matt Guy-SECC  
Darla Hall-PECC/Children First  
Edith Jolly-PC. CCCAP  
Alexander Winters-PECC/Children First  
Darla Hall-PECC/Children First  
Christina Hopewell-PDPHE  
Alyssa Hopkins-OJC  
Hunter Johnson-PECC/Children First  
Teresa Mathews-PECC/Children First  
Ryan Montoya-PECC/Children First  
Berlinda Pedro-OJC  
Rita Samora-ECEMS  
Angie Shehorn-PECC/Children First

Brenda Rodriguez-ESCCC  
Gina Wilburn-DHS/CCCAP  
Alexander Winter-PECC/Children First  
Emilee Lopez-CPLC  
Maria Chavez-Contreras-Catholic Charities  
Monica Torres-CPLC  
Celia Serrano-CPLC  
Natalie Guy Hazard-CPLC  
Julie Brown-CPLC  
Raelynn Martinez-CPLC  
Marie Chavez-OJC  
Cruzita Tafoya-PCC  
Cindy Keasling-D70  
Gerald Gallegos-Casanova-EC Health Solutions  
Edith Jolly-PC CCCAP  
Denise Louther-DHS CCCAP  
Arlene Kennedy-SSCC  
Lacey Soffer-Parent Possible  
Emily Dilka-Health Solutions  
Carmin Armijo-D60

**I. Introduction: Meeting called to order by Angie at 11:03 am.**

**II. Additions to the Agenda: N/A**

**III. Approval of Minutes: January 2025-approved.**

**IV. Agency Highlight-  
Vroom-Lucy Soffer**

**Agency Overview:** Lucy Sota, Room Partner and Manager at Parent Possible in Denver, Colorado, shares an exciting update about their work in early childhood development. Parent Possible offers home visiting programs, including *Parents as Teachers* and *HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters)*, and serves as

the Colorado state office for these programs. Additionally, Parent Possible introduced Vroom to Colorado about eight years ago, aiming to enhance early childhood brain development through simple, everyday activities.

**About Vroom:** Vroom is designed to support parents, caregivers, teachers, and librarians by providing easy, science-backed strategies to promote brain development in children. Rather than introducing entirely new routines, Vroom enhances everyday interactions like diaper changes, mealtimes, and school drop-offs with brain-building activities. The platform offers over 1,000 activities in 19 languages, including English, Spanish, and 17 others, making it accessible to a wide range of families. Vroom's resources are completely free, including an app, website, text platform, YouTube channel, social media presence, and printable materials.

### **Key Features:**

- Free access for families and community partners
- Over 1,000 brain-building activities designed to fit seamlessly into daily life
- Available in 19 languages, making it widely accessible
- Platforms include an app, website, social media, and public installations in museums and healthcare settings

**Vroom's Impact:** Since its launch in 2014 by the Bezos Family Foundation, Vroom has expanded globally, reaching over 2 million families in 80 countries. Parent Possible became the state anchor for Vroom in Colorado in 2016, contributing to Vroom's national and international success.

### **Recent Updates:**

- Vroom added new tips to help parents navigate challenging moments such as meltdowns, picky eating, and self-regulation.
- The platform continues to expand its reach, with ongoing efforts to include even more languages and support for diverse communities.

In summary, Vroom is revolutionizing early childhood development by turning everyday moments into opportunities for learning and growth.

## **V. New Business:**

### **A. SECC Update**

- **Parent Survey:** The SECC Parent Coalition has distributed a parent survey, now available in Spanish. Flyers are available in the back of the room, and those interested can take some with them. The survey will close this Friday, and the results will be shared in May, showcasing community feedback from both parents and providers.
- **Survey Promotion:** A special thank you to Marisa Stoller, the City Clerk and Commission member, for promoting the survey on Facebook, which resulted in a significant increase in responses. The survey has garnered strong engagement and valuable insights.
- **Coalition Logo:** The coalition is in the process of designing a logo to improve recognition and visibility within the community.

- **Upcoming Presentation:** In May, the coalition will present the results of the surveys to all involved, sharing key findings from both the parent and provider perspectives.

The team is excited about the progress and the opportunity to continue building connections in the community, with an added appreciation for the resources from Vroom.

#### **B. UPK Updates**

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie stated the following:

A piece of legislation aimed at removing Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) from working with Universal Preschool (UPK) has been delayed. It was initially set to go to the Senate Education Committee today but has been postponed to next week due to ongoing revisions. The main focus of the bill is to give school districts and childcare providers the same level of access to the UPK application and the bridge care system as LCOs currently have.

#### **C. Resource Sharing Day**

A few weeks ago, there were concerns about the low number of RSVPs for Resource Sharing Day, with only 36 people signed up at the time. This was much lower than expected based on historical attendance. However, the response has dramatically improved, and now 147 people are registered to attend, which is a great turnout. This year, Resource Sharing Day will feature a mix of agency highlights and a keynote speaker, which will be a new format blending their traditional approach. The team is looking forward to seeing how this new combination works and is excited for the speaker and the overall event.

#### **D. Provider Needs/Concerns/Celebrations**

- The recent feedback from providers in the Pueblo area highlights several key concerns. A major issue is the workforce shortage, with many early childhood professionals nearing retirement, and a lack of new workers entering the field. This has raised concerns about the future of early childhood education in Pueblo. Efforts to address this at the state level have been made, emphasizing the need for recruitment and better compensation to attract new workers. Another concern is the long wait times for autism diagnoses, with families experiencing delays of 6 to 9 months. Providers are seeking information on other agencies offering quicker services to share with families. Finally, there are worries about the future of Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding, particularly among home-based providers who feel uncertain about sustainability due to a freeze on funding. Providers are encouraged to remain optimistic and continue exploring fiscal agreements with the department, as the freeze may not be permanent.

#### **E. Legislation Update**

Angie Shehorn-Children First

While the bill still includes this, other parts are proposed to be removed. The Rule Advisory Council will remain intact, rather than being replaced by a State Board of Early Childhood. LCOs will continue to partner with programs and school districts to ensure smooth operations for the universal preschool application process. The proposed changes could cost up to \$1.5 million, a significant amount in a tight state budget. This could

potentially kill the bill if the fiscal note is not revised and reduced. The current system ensures continuity of care for children enrolled in existing programs, but the proposed changes could jeopardize this, making it difficult for children to continue attending their current programs if they wish to participate in universal preschool. Advocates are encouraged to continue monitoring the situation and providing feedback, as the bill remains a concern. If the fiscal issues are not addressed, the bill may not move forward.

#### **F. PECC Logo**

Angie Shehorn-Children First

The group discussed possibly revamping the logo to reflect the changing times. Several logo options were presented, with the first one being favored by many for its clear representation of the Council's mission. It included symbols of caring adults and children of varying ages, along with the year the Council was established and its full name. Some suggestions included changing the green color, which was noted as problematic for accessibility, and modifying the font to something simpler, like Arial, to improve readability. There were also concerns about ensuring the new logo didn't resemble logos from other organizations, like the Nursing Family Partnership. After receiving feedback, the team decided to move forward with refining the logo and will send it out for final review before implementing it at the next meeting.

#### **G. Upcoming Trainings**

Angie Shehorn-Children First

The upcoming Neurodiversity Training, led by Gerald, is scheduled for this Saturday, March 1st. There is currently one remaining spot available for this session, which is otherwise fully booked. Future trainings are also available, and anyone interested, whether a provider, foster parent, or parent, is welcome to attend. Although there have been some delays in receiving promotional materials, such as the flyer for the Neurodiversity Training, the team has worked around this by sending out the training details via email. They are actively addressing these challenges to better meet their needs moving forward.

#### **H. Council RFA**

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie stated every five years the Early Childhood Councils must reapply to be the Early Childhood Council. She stated the five-year mark is coming up in 2025. She explained the process for reapplying. She mentioned Children First will reach out if programs MOU's are not updated.

### **VI. Evaluation**

Eileen Dennis

Angie stated Eileen Dennis from Triple Aim will be sending an evaluation (1-5 rating with feedback) email after every council meeting. Eileen will compile and share those reports. The information is received in aggregate.

### **VII. Community Reports –**

The team encourages everyone to respond to Eileen Dennis's evaluation email with ratings and feedback, as it helps improve programming. The agency presentations have been well-received, as

they offer more detailed information and keep the community up to date. Agencies interested in being highlighted should reach out to schedule their presentation.

Upcoming events include:

- **Family Resource Training:** A virtual session on trauma-informed parenting tomorrow at 5:30 PM, led by Emily Lopez. The training is open to anyone, with Spanish translation and closed captioning available.
- **April Events:** Various events are being planned for April, including:
  - **Funfair:** April 12th, 9 AM to 12 PM on campus (contact Joe for tables).
  - **Cherish the Child:** First Thursday in April at Pueblo Mall.
  - **Early Childhood Summit:** April 4th, with a \$25 registration fee for an all-day conference.
  - **Tree of Life Celebration:** April 15th at Mineral Palace Park, with a proclamation by the mayor and an environmentally friendly bird feeder activity for children.
  - **Infant Toddler Curriculum Training:** March 25th, for those interested in early childhood development.

The team is also working on finalizing the April events and will share more details soon.

**VII. Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 11:59 am.

**VIII. Next Meeting — March 24, 2025. 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://zoom.us/j/93498195039?pwd=eDJvamY0UkU3Wjdsb3Y5Zm8wMzFKQT09>

Meeting ID: 934 9819 5039 Passcode: 570894

**Local Resources**

Children First Childcare Connections – [www.childrenfirstco.org](http://www.childrenfirstco.org)

Pueblo County Childhood Resources <https://county.pueblo.org/public-health/pueblo-county-childhood-resources>

**Statewide Resources**

[www.coloradoshines.com](http://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