



**Pueblo Early
Childhood Council**

MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 26, 2024 HYBRID VIA WEBEX

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:

Berlinda Perdo-OJC
Teresa Mathews-PECC/Children First
Brenda Rodriguez-ESCCC
Rebecca Bellavia-PECC/Children First
Dwanette Martinez-Migrant Education/D70
Angie Shehorn-PECC/Children First
Mari Palma-ECEMS
Ryan Montoya-PECC/Children First
Paula Arellano-PECC/Children First
Frankie Boone-DHS/CCCAP
Jennifer Walters-PECC/Children First
Alexander Winters-PECC/Children First
LyCynthia Ascencio-OJC

Cindy Keasling-D70
Rhonda Duskey-Kochis-CPLC
Darla Hall-PECC/Children First
Katrina Appel-Colorado BlueSky
Gina Wilburn-DHS
Natalie Sparks-Kinderkirk
Molly Milusnic-PCC ECE
Matt Guy-Common Thread
Hunter Johnson-PECC/Children First
Joe Bellavia-PECC/Children First
Emilee Lopez-CPLC
Ida Rhodes-Catholic Charities
Vanessa Mateo-OJC

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

II. Additions to the Agenda: N/A

III. Approval of Minutes: January 2024-approved

IV. Agency Highlight-

Sarah Martinez-Health Department-Communities That Care (CTC)

Sarah stated Children First has been an active partner in Communities that Care since 2016. She reported currently they are working on a childcare strategy which aligns with all of the work that the early childhood council does on a regular basis. Sarah explained CTC is an evidence-based program out of the State Health Department and the first step in the process is to engage coalition members/community. She stated the Health Department is the main contractor for CTC funds that have been funded for the last eight years. She reported the Coalition has 57 members representing different sectors in the community from nonprofits to youth serving agencies to early childhood, to young people themselves. Sarah stated the main goal of CTC is to prevent youth substance use in Pueblo. She stated one of those strategy teams is the quality child care strategy team. Sarah stated they also have a whole team of ten youth advisors (local high schoolers) who sit on the coalition whose voice is really crucial to the product. She stated their main data comes from the confidential Colorado Survey that is administered in middle schools and high schools all over the State of Colorado every other year, and it's taken by young people themselves. Sarah stated they really look at risk

factors and protective factors and the questions. She discussed the importance of a trusted adult (protective factor) in the children's lives the less likely they are to use drugs and/or vape in high school. She proceeded to give statistics. Sarah stated they review the early age of students starting vaping, alcohol and drug use. She reported the coalition wanted to prioritize academic failure in late elementary school as a risk factor to work on and research shows that when a young person experiences failure in third to fifth grade, they're more likely to then use substances in high school, and it's not necessarily a lack of intellect, but that they just failed at a third-grade level which then increases their likelihood to use drugs in high school. Sarah stated extracurricular activities for young people are the third concern and protective factor. She reported they have been implementing community-wide strategies since 2019. She stated free bus rides for transportation to places children want to go and Southern Colorado Youth Go (SOCO YOGO) a one-stop-shop for all healthy things to do in Pueblo. She mentioned the students can scan a QR code to attain points to be redeemed at local businesses and school swag. Sarah reported the next strategy they implemented was free zoning in the city for all new licensed home child care providers and are working on free county fees. She proceeded to explain the measure to help families pay for child care failed but they will work on other options. Sarah highlighted an early childhood resource webpage that the team designed and they are working with the State legislature on a Statewide Bill to regulate the wait list fee for programs. She stated they are going to create a toolkit for employers to open up childcare centers. Sarah reported she is currently working on a child care center for city and county dispatch workers, police department, sheriff's office and those who work around the clock. Sarah finished with creating a global campaign to push the Colorado childcare contribution tax credit to hopefully get more of those big businesses like Black Hills, Trane, and Excel to really invest their money locally and the child care homes and centers get a 50% tax break. A discussion ensued.

V. New Business:

A. Children First New Staff

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie introduced Hunter Johnson a new Coach at Children First and mentioned the department is fully staffed.

B. UPK Updates

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie stated the application for next year will launch February 20, 2024. She mentioned UPK families can go in and apply for UPK. Angie stated the new name- Colorado Universal Preschool. She informed the Council from February 20, 2024- March 20, 2024 children who are currently enrolled in a program to have priority points or placement to be directly placed into a program before it opens. Angie stated this coming year the UPK qualifying factor is 100% of the Federal poverty level and an additional qualification is 270% of the Federal poverty level gives the families two qualifiers they need for a full day. She stated three-year old's **will not** be managed by the system but through the school district. Angie stated if there are any questions please contact Angie, Alex or Ryan. A discussion ensued.

C. Shared Measurement data Dashboard Demo

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie shared the dashboard with the following data.

- 71,000 children are in high quality
- 314,000 children, birth to 5 population
- 23% of the children who are eligible for preschool or eligible for childcare are in high quality programs
- 7.2% of our children are in a high-quality program.
- 630 children from Pueblo who are in a high-quality program

Angie encouraged everyone to go on and take a look at some of the interesting information that is made available through this dashboard, and in August this year will be when reporting all of the data to the State will occur. She stated some of it is pulled from the State, but a lot of it is local numbers for her to reach out to your agencies to find out how many children are in nurse family partnership, Hippy, and parents' teachers so there can be accurate numbers to really paint a clear picture of what it looks like in Pueblo compared to other communities, and to compare it to the State of Colorado.

D. Job Board

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie stated she manages the job board and if anyone has any early childhood jobs they would like to post she can send the information out via email to the 11-county region and post them to the job board.

E. [Legislative tracker](#)

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie stated there are several things happening in the legislature this year that is very important to early childhood. She stated there was one introduced last week about a tax credit for early care workers on top of the one that you already have with the credential it can be for home health care and medical providers for early childhood. She stated she can answer any questions.

F. Previous Council minutes

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie informed the council members they can find council minutes at the Pueblo Community College website. [Children First](#)

G. Youth and Family Resource Guide

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie asked that everyone take a look at the resource guide and send any updates for next year's guide to her. She mentioned a new QR code on the new guides that will be available to search the PDF form that will be located on the Children First Website.

H. [Training and Event Calendar](#)

Angie Shehorn-Children First

Angie stated at the bottom of her email anyone can find the link to the event calendar. She stated Joe updates the link and she updates the Childhood Resources page for the Health Department. Angie stated she relies on the community to inform Children First of any events that need to be added and Joe adds Children First events to the calendar. Angie invited everyone to Steve Spangler Science event for free.

I. Vote: Adopt Strategic Plan 2024-2029

Angie Shehorn- Children First

Angie asked the council to vote on adopting the strategic plan she sent out last month and Matt made a motion and it was seconded by Dwanette. Motion carried.

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

Question and answer session about Colorado Universal Preschool and preschool screening.

Chicanos Por La Causa-Rhonda stated they are in the second week of the new grantee. She mentioned the CPLC will be serving 265 children throughout Pueblo, Huerfano and Las Animas counties. She stated that by March they hopefully will be able to enroll children for next year.

VII. Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.

VIII. Next Meeting — March 25, 2024. 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

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,
Paula Arellano