



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:	March 24, 2025
Time:	11:00 AM -12:00 PM
Location:	Hybrid via Zoom (SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor)
Recorded By:	Ryan Montoya

Attendees:	
Annette Alcon-CPLC	Emilee Lopez-CPLC
Katrina Appel-Colorado Blue Sky	Gina Lopez Fergusion-Caring 4 Colorado
Paula Arellano-Children First/PECC	Raelynn Martinez-CPLC
Joe Bellavia-Children First/PECC	Brittany McAlister-Catholic Charities
Rebecca Bellavia-Children First/PECC	Cyndy Pacheco-CPLC
Frankie Boone-DHS	Mari Palma-ECMES
Kristen Brown-New Leaf Therapy	Randi Mohar-PDPHE
Maria Chavez-Catholic Charities	Ryan Montoya-Children First/PECC
Pam Flores-PDPHE	Brenda Rodriguez-ESCCC
Gerald Gallegos Casanova-Health Solutions	Josette Rusk-SSCC
Matt Guy-SECC	Donna Salvador-ESCCC
Natalie Guy-Hazard-CPLC	Rita Samora-DHS
Darla Hall-Children First/PECC	Angie Shehorn-Children First/PECC
Hunter Johnson-Children First/PECC	Cruzita Tafoya-PCC
Arlene Kennedy-SSCC	Monica Torres-CPLC

Agenda

Introductions:	Meeting called to order by Angie at 11:00 am.
Additions to Agenda:	N/A
Approval of Minutes:	February 2025-approved.

Agency Highlight

A New Leaf Therapy: Kristin Brown

The Director of Operations at New Leaf Therapy introduced the organization and its services during a virtual presentation. New Leaf Therapy, which has been operating in Pueblo since 2015, provides outpatient therapy and counseling for a range of issues, including depression, anxiety, trauma, relationship problems, and job dissatisfaction. They specialize in supporting "helpers" and currently employ 50 mental health therapists and 6-8 administrative staff. The organization is expanding and opening a sixth location in Mesa Junction.

New Leaf offers various services, such as individual therapy, couples counseling, family therapy, and group therapy. They use specialized treatments like EMDR, brain synchronization, and animal-assisted therapy. Upcoming group therapy includes equine-assisted sessions for veterans, first responders, and women, as well as teen girls' and LGBTQ+ groups.

The therapy center also has community partnerships with Pueblo County, local schools, and organizations like Villa Bella and PATH for EMS. They offer training on topics like self-care, burnout, and positive workplace culture. New Leaf accepts a broad range of insurances and offers a graduate student internship program with lower rates for clients seeking more affordable services.

For community services or training inquiries, people can reach out to the listed contacts. Appointments can be made by calling or emailing the center directly.

New Business

SECC Update	<p>Matt Guy</p> <p>The Parent Coalition closed their parent survey at the end of February, receiving nearly 100 responses from over 1,500 flyers distributed. The findings will be presented in May, and they are currently reviewing the data, which has provided valuable insights. They are still collecting stories—both positive and negative—so people are encouraged to send them to Angie or the presenter. The Coalition is also focusing on issues related to special needs, particularly concerning funding and regulatory changes that could impact both identified and unidentified special needs children. They are closely monitoring these developments to ensure support for these children.</p>
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UPK Update	<p>Angie Shehorn-Children First</p> <p>The Universal Preschool update shared that the paperwork to continue as the local coordinating organization (LCO) for universal preschool has been submitted, and they are now awaiting official confirmation. There was a 5-day protest period that just ended, allowing any agency to challenge their award. The team is confident they will remain the LCO for the 6-county region in southeast Colorado for at least one year, with the possibility of renewing for up to five years, depending on funding and other factors.</p> <p>Regarding enrollment, they are finishing the second match period and will start direct enrollment on April 1st. Families applying now will need to wait until then for placement. Several new programs are being added, and existing programs are adjusting their offerings, which will lead to changes in placements to ensure all children have a seat for the upcoming school year.</p>
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Provider Needs, Concerns, Celebrations	<p>Angie Shehorn-Children First</p> <p>The provider update noted that there hasn't been much feedback from providers recently. One key issue is that there were not enough applications for the apprenticeship program at Pueblo Community College (PCC) to form a cohort this semester. However, they plan to offer the cohort again in the fall. If anyone is interested in working in early childhood education (ECE) or needs on-the-job training, they can relate to the presenter or Molly Malusnik to be notified of the next cohort.</p> <p>Additionally, the Southern Colorado Early Childhood Sector Partnership, which started in Fremont County, is producing a series of videos to recruit new individuals into the workforce and address compensation issues. These videos are available on social media and can be shared to help spread the word.</p>
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Legislation	<p>Angie Shehorn-Children First</p> <p>Regarding recent legislation, the bill introduced by Senator Kirkmeyer to separate LCOs and UPK has been postponed indefinitely, which is a positive outcome. Several other bills are being monitored:</p> <p>Senate Bill 25004: Related to the childcare waitlist, this bill has undergone significant changes since its original version but is still progressing through the legislative process.</p> <p>House Bill 25110: Concerns private equity acquisitions of childcare centers. It was introduced in the Senate, but the hearing date is still pending.</p> <p>Senate Bill 25017: Aimed at codifying existing early childhood health programs in Colorado, it's currently under review by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.</p> <p>Senate Bill 25199: This bill suspends legislative interim activities for the 2025 session but allows the Colorado Youth Advisory Committee to continue meeting, though it loses its drafting authority.</p> <p>The Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECLA) is monitoring these bills, but there are few they can support because most lack bipartisan backing, which is a requirement for their support.</p>
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PECC Logo	<p>Angie Shehorn-Children First</p> <p>Angie shared the new PECC logo that majority voted for.</p>
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Upcoming Events	<p>Joe Bellavia-Children First</p> <p>Cherish the Child: On April 3rd, from 4:30 to 6:30 PM at the Pueblo Mall, in front of JCPenney. Flyers are available for those interested.</p> <p>Early Childhood Summit: On April 4th, from 7:45 AM to 4:00 PM, in partnership with CSU Pueblo. This is a large conference with 200-230 people signed up. Brian Post will be the keynote speaker.</p> <p>Annual Fun Fair: On April 12th, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the Norman Campus Student Center. There will be dancers, Muso's food truck, and Mr. Magic. If you're interested in having a table, contact Joe.</p> <p>Tree of Life Celebration: On April 15th, from 9:00 to 11:00 AM at Mineral Palace Park. Mayor Graham will read the proclamation, and someone else will also read it, likely the same person who did last year.</p>
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Evaluation	<p>You should be receiving an email later today, just quick response to that email rating us from one into to 5. And then any comments you happen to have about where we can improve the meetings.</p>
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Community Reports	<p>Program Applications: Applications for the next school year have opened. Families interested can apply online or through a link/QR code, which will guide them to an online pre-application and program map. A family service worker will contact them afterward. Flyers can be distributed to families.</p> <p>Healthcare Plans: The team is in the process of planning health care for this year, with the proposed date being the 23rd of April. They plan to participate in this again.</p> <p>Early Intervention Services: Despite challenges from a statewide budget deficit following the February storm, services will continue as normal until July 1st. The goal is to minimize any impact on families, though some cuts are necessary to meet the state's budget.</p> <p>Special Needs and Early Childhood Updates: A recent meeting with Dr. Lisa Roy and Angie focused on special needs intervention, and efforts to improve the process are ongoing. The district 70 School Board voted to keep all preschool locations open for the next year, including 4 locations offering full-day Universal Preschool. District 60 will have a special meeting on March 31st to discuss Universal Preschool for the following year.</p> <p>Hiring: Several positions are now open in early childhood home visiting programs, including a parent support provider, home visiting support, and a parent educator position. Interviews for the educator position are starting soon.</p> <p>Celebration for Providers: Jennifer Walters, a homegrown provider, was recently licensed, marking a significant achievement.</p>
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Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at 11:58 am

Next Meeting
<p>April 28, 2025.</p> <p>HYBRID-Virtually via Zoom</p> <p>In Person Meeting at TLC@ PCC, 1000 Minnequa Avenue, Pueblo, CO 81004</p> <p>SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor</p> <p>Join Zoom Meeting</p> <p>https://zoom.us/j/93498195039?pwd=eDJvamY0UkU3Wjdsb3Y5Zm8wMzFKQT09</p> <p>Meeting ID: 934 9819 5039 Passcode: 570894</p> <p>Local Resources</p> <p>Children First Childcare Connections – www.childrenfirstco.org</p> <p>Pueblo County Childhood Resources https://county.pueblo.org/public-health/pueblo-county-childhood-resources</p> <p>Statewide Resources</p> <p>www.coloradoshines.com (Colorado Shines)</p> <p>https://www.coloradoshinespdis.com/s/login/ (Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System – PDIS)</p> <p>https://earlylearningco.org/ (Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines)</p>

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan Montoya