



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:	April 28, 2025
Time:	11:00 AM -12:00 PM
Location:	Hybrid via Webex (SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor)
Recorded By:	Ryan Montoya

Attendees:	
Katrina Appel-Colorado Blue Sky	Arlene Kennedy: SCC1 (online)
Paula Arellano-Children First/PECC	Dwanette Martinez: Migrant Education
Joe Bellavia-Children First/PECC	Teresa Mathews: Children First/PECC (online)
Rebecca Bellavia-Children First/PECC	Cynthia Pacheco: CPLC (online)
Maria Chavez-Catholic Charities	Brenda Rodriguez-ESCCC
Kristie Dorwart-Health Solutions	Josette Rusk: SSCCS (online)
Rhonda Duskey-Kochis: CPLC	Angie Shehorn-Children First/PECC
Matt Guy-SECC	Monica Torres-CPLC
Darla Hall-Children First/PECC	Alexander Winter: Children First/PECC
Alyssa Hopkins-EHS	Bermudez Dalene (online)
Hunter Johnson-Children First/PECC	Randi (online)
Cindy Keasling-D70 (online)	Gabby Stapleton: PDPHE (online)

Agenda

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

Agency Highlight

Public Department of Public Health and Environment: Gabby Stapleton

Overview

- **Program Name:** Healthy Beverages for All
- **Goal:** Reduce excessive sugary drink consumption among children, particularly in Pueblo, CO, to prevent chronic diseases like diabetes and cavities.

Main Initiative

- **Policy Proposal:** "Healthy Drinks in Kids' Meals" – a proposed city ordinance.
 - **Change:** Make the *default drink* in kids' meals **water or unsweetened milk** (not sugary drinks).
 - **Important:** Kids/families can still order other drinks, but the healthy option is the default.

Current Status

- The initiative is part of a **3-year statewide grant project**, now in **Year 2**.
- Seven counties are involved, some working on similar policies or soda taxes.

Community Engagement

- Created and promoted the "**Drink to Grow**" survey to assess public support.
 - **Result:** 81% of 321 respondents support a healthy default drink policy in Pueblo.
- Community outreach efforts include:
 - Toddler story time booths at libraries
 - Presentations to healthcare and early childhood organizations
 - Direct outreach to restaurants

Data Highlights

- **2021:** 23.6% of children aged 1–14 in Pueblo consumed sugary drinks daily (vs. 15% statewide).
- **2023:** That number rose sharply to **70%**, showing urgent need for intervention.

Support & Implementation

- **Asking for community support:**
 - Agencies like the Early Childhood Council are asked to sign a **letter of support** (non-binding).
 - Support includes use of logos on outreach materials.
- **Restaurant Incentives:**
 - Voluntary participation is encouraged.
 - Financial incentives are offered to cover menu changes.
- **Pushback:**
 - Not from soda companies, but from restaurants hesitant about offering milk due to cost/spoilage.

Other Notes

- Outreach to schools isn't part of the current scope (restaurants only), but feedback is welcomed.
- Latino Chamber of Commerce is tentatively supportive; efforts to connect with the Greater Chamber continue.
- Past initiatives like "Steps to a Healthier Pueblo" were mentioned as similar efforts focused on schools.

New Business

SECC Update

Matt Guy

1. Parent Survey Update

- A community **parent survey** was previously conducted.
- Some data had to be cleaned ("scrubbed"), but the revised **analysis is complete**.
- The **Coalition** will present findings at the **May Council meeting**, alongside annual **provider survey** results for comparison.
- Expect a mix of **surprising and unsurprising insights**.

2. Kids Count Day at the Capitol

- Several members attended **Kids Count Day** at the Colorado Capitol.
- Unfortunately, **many legislators were unavailable** due to the introduction of the **state budget** and heavy bill activity ("Obamathon").
- However, they had a **productive meeting with the Colorado Children's Campaign**, which is interested in doing more **local work** in Pueblo.

	<p>3. Book Review Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team is reviewing a book titled <i>Parenting is Hard</i> by Ashley Manson, encountered at the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference. The book focuses on non-traditional caregivers. The group is not endorsing it yet—just offering feedback to help shape future versions. <hr/> <p>4. Outreach in New Mexico</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They're attempting to contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A New Mexico parent coalition (statewide group) A Los Alamos foundation that supports grandparents and older caregivers Progress has been slow due to unresponsive contacts, but outreach efforts are ongoing.
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UPK Update	<p><u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u></p> <p>1. Enrollment & Matching Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UPK enrollment is not progressing smoothly. Many families are still unmatched and in limbo. Programs with vacant seats are encouraged to reach out — there's a significant list of families needing placement. District 60 changes are impacting placements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced from 24 hours/week to 10 hours/week, split into AM/PM half-day sessions. Half of their preschool classrooms will close next year, reducing available seats. As a result, many families are looking for new options. <hr/> <p>2. District Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District 70 is now offering 4 full-day sites (30 hours/week) and accepting families from outside their boundaries. District 60 continues to serve both 3- and 4-year-olds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 155 max slots for 3-year-olds; currently expecting to serve 135–140. 9 classrooms for 3-year-olds out of 16 total classrooms; the rest are for 4-year-olds. <hr/> <p>3. Community-Based Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous partnerships (where community providers received payment via District 60) may be reconsidered in the 2026–27 school year. Currently not likely for 2025–26, but referrals to community providers will continue for families needing full-day care. <hr/> <p>4. Funding Clarification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a child attends two programs (e.g., a district preschool and a private provider), only one program can receive UPK funding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The second program must be funded through other means (e.g., CCCAP). <hr/> <p>5. Provider Status & Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider is close to becoming UPK eligible, pending licensing and fingerprinting. Once officially open, they can be added as a UPK provider. The goal is to expand sites and capacity, though financial sustainability (especially with Head Start challenges) remains a concern.
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	<p>6. IEP & Special Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with IEPs typically receive services through the school district. Some families opt for private providers; in which case the district ensures providers meet the necessary qualifications to deliver services.
<p>Provider Needs, Concerns, Celebrations</p>	<p><u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u></p> <p>CCCAP Funding Freeze</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing concern about the CCCAP (Colorado Child Care Assistance Program) funding freeze. Providers are unsure about the long-term impact on business stability. No new updates at this time. If no changes occur, the state is projected to be millions in deficit by FY 2027. <p>Training Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers are expressing a strong preference for in-person trainings. They're burned out on virtual/online formats. Agencies that can help offer in-person training are encouraged to partner—contact Joe or the speaker to schedule sessions.
<p>Legislation</p>	<p><u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u></p> <p>Senate Bill 004 – Waitlist Fee Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originally driven by local efforts in Pueblo. Signed by the Governor. Final version is much lighter than the original proposal. Still worth reviewing for those interested in its impact. <p>Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was scheduled to sunset, but legislation has renewed it. ECLC will continue its work, which is a positive development for early childhood systems. <p>House Bill 1296 – Tax Expenditure Adjustments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large, complex bill involving multiple tax expenditures. Colorado Child Care Contribution Tax Credit has been removed from this bill. If the bill passes, expect significant changes to tax credits and deductions. <p>Senate Bill 197 – Tony Grampas Youth Services (TGYS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to modernize and improve the TGYS grant program. Has passed the Health & Human Services Committee and moves forward. <p>Senate Bill 200 – Dyslexia Screening & READ Act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially proposed to replace Kindergarten Readiness Assessments. Amended to now include both assessments: Kindergarten Readiness and dyslexia screening. Dyslexia screening is not currently funded. <p>The Long Bill (State Budget)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passed both legislative chambers. Returned to the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) for amendments. Will return to chambers for final approval.

Evaluation	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.
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Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at 11:58 am

Next Meeting
May 19, 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
<p align="center"><u>Local Resources</u></p> Children First Childcare Connections – www.childrenfirstco.org Pueblo County Childhood Resources https://county.pueblo.org/public-health/pueblo-county-childhood-resources
<p align="center"><u>Statewide Resources</u></p> 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