



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 19, 2025
Time:	11:00 AM -12:00 PM
Location:	Hybrid via Webex (SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor)
Recorded By:	Ryan Montoya

Joe Bellavia-Children First/PECC	Vanessa Mateo-OJC
Rebecca Bellavia-Children First/PECC	Teresa Mathews-Children First/PECC
Matt Guy-SECC	Berlina Pedro-OJC
Natalie Guy-Hazard-CPLC	Brenda Rodriguez-ESCCC
Darla Hall-Children First/PECC	Angie Shehorn-Children First/PECC
Alyssa Hopkins-Early Head Start	Monica Torres-CPLC
Dwanette Martinez-Migrant Education	

Agenda

Introductions:	Meeting called to order by Angie at 11:00 am.
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Additions to Agenda:	N/A
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Approval of Minutes:	March 2025-approval tabled until July
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Agency Highlight

Steelworks Center of the West – Community Outreach Summary

The speaker, representing the Steelworks Center of the West (located next to Everest), shared a brief and enthusiastic message about strengthening community engagement and partnerships.

Key Points:

Mission & Role:

Their core mission is preserving the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company's (CF&I) archival collection while increasingly focusing on community involvement, particularly in the Bessemer neighborhood.

Community Resilience Hub (Coming Soon):

They are developing a Community Resilience Hub, planned to open within 1.5 to 2 years, with:

Space for local organizations to offer services.

A potential commercial kitchen for local startups.

A large event space.

Community rooms that may be used for free depending on need.

Partnership Opportunities:

The Center is seeking collaborative partners—especially those offering child, education, or community services—who need a location in the Bessemer area.

Museum Programs for Kids:

Discounts and Free Admission for school/youth groups.

Transportation Costs Covered (they will pay for school buses, though they don't have a bus themselves).

STEM Activities like dry ice demos, cookie mining, slime, and educational cartoons.

Willing to customize activities to support existing educational goals.

Can accommodate repeated visits with varied programming.

Can also travel to you with mobile educational kits (minus messy things like slime).

Accessibility & Flexibility:

Willing to comp costs for space use or museum admission depending on needs.

Eager to support summer programming with recurring or one-off visits.

Committed to being a community partner, responsive to the needs of those serving children and families.

Closing Message:

They want to be remembered as a local, flexible, supportive resource, and encourage agencies to reach out directly, take a business card, and stay connected—especially as they finalize plans for the community center.

New Business

SECC Update

Matt Guy

Parent Coalition Meeting Recap

Purpose & Participation

The group is still accepting new members. The recruitment flyer remains unchanged from 4 years ago, but funding is secured for at least another year.

All are welcome, but there's a noted gap in participation from single-parent households.

The coalition currently has a diverse group in terms of age, ethnicity, and family types.

Meeting Info

Meetings are virtual only (via Zoom) for accessibility and convenience.

They follow the Early Childhood Council's schedule, so no meeting in June.

Regular meeting times:

Second Thursday of each month at 6 PM

Second Friday of each month at 12 PM (noon)

Accessibility & Inclusivity

Members can participate asynchronously via email or text if they can't attend live.

The group values family-friendly meetings, welcoming kids and background activity.

Recognized the importance of using inclusive, person-first language, especially for families with children with disabilities (e.g., "families with children with special needs" instead of "special needs families").

Impact & Collaboration

The coalition is highly collaborative, with most initiatives driven by parent input.

Notable contributions from the group include:

An enrichment guide

Resources for non-traditional parents

Support for families with children with special needs

Final Notes

Appreciation was expressed for group members, especially active contributors like Darla and Dawn.

Closing remarks emphasized the value of teamwork, community involvement, and the ongoing mission to support children and families across the area.

UPK Update










Angie Shehorn-Children First
Reimbursement & Funding

	<p>Providers received a small increase in reimbursement rates for the upcoming year—modest, but still a positive adjustment.</p> <p>A task force has been meeting weekly to answer questions from the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) regarding:</p> <p>The structure and roles of Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) vs. Early Childhood Councils (ECCs)</p> <p>Funding, local impact, and sustainability</p> <p>Key Findings from the Task Force ECCs are more stable and effective than standalone LCOs due to stronger infrastructure and community ties.</p> <p>Many standalone LCOs have failed, and their functions have been absorbed by ECCs:</p> <p>Only 3 standalone LCOs remain (Denver, Adams County, Jefferson/Clear Creek/Gilpin).</p> <p>The report based on these findings will be finalized by July 1, with a full department report presented in September.</p> <p>Underlying concern: future funding cuts are likely, and this evaluation helps determine where cuts might occur.</p> <p>LCO Appointment & Structure The presenting organization was awarded the LCO role for a 6-county region for one year, with potential renewal.</p> <p>Regional specialists still exist to support LCOs.</p> <p>Future funding (beyond 2026) is uncertain but being actively advocated for.</p> <p>Universal Preschool (UPK) Program Clarifications Enrollment & Matching Process Families must complete and submit a UPK application to be considered.</p> <p>If families don't submit, no placement will occur—this has caused some confusion and delays.</p> <p>If a family rejects a match, the system may attempt to match them to the next listed provider, or programs can reach out to them directly.</p> <p>Placement Details 3-year-olds only receive 10 hours/week of UPK funding.</p> <p>4-year-olds are automatically eligible for 15 hours/week, unless limited by the school district.</p> <p>Some districts (like District 16 and 70) only offer 10–12 hours, even for 4-year-olds, which can create misunderstandings.</p> <p>Support for Families</p>
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	<p>Providers or families can contact the LCO directly to check application status, confirm hours, or troubleshoot issues.</p> <p>Ongoing bi-weekly communication is sent to families and programs regarding matches and updates.</p> <p>No Special Reimbursement for Districts All providers, including school districts, receive funding based on the same state-determined formula—no extra reimbursement for districts.</p>
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Legislation	<p>At last week's ECLa (Early Childhood Leadership Alliance) statewide membership meeting, a new insurance resource was introduced:</p> <p>TrueNorth Insurance Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacted by an Early Childhood Council to find more affordable insurance options for providers, especially those in Universal Preschool (UPK). • Now offering a range of insurance plans for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Home-based, center-based, and school district-based providers ◦ Health, dental, vision, and prescription coverage ◦ Liability insurance (notably, \$500/year for home providers—significantly lower than usual rates) <p>This is available to <i>any</i> provider—not limited to UPK—who may find their current insurance unaffordable.</p> <p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info about TrueNorth and plan details will be sent out after the meeting.
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>

Coaching Updatr	<p>Angie Shehorn-Children First</p> <p>So changes in the coaching fund request for 2526. So those coaching applications, unfortunately, this year will not be open. July one. It'll be closer to the end of July before they're open, because of some changes happening at the State. So when those applications are open, you can apply for those funds. But funds have been cut by 30% at the State. So each community is getting less and less coaching funds for this next fiscal year. So they're asking that we prioritize. So there will be a prioritization for the applications that come in. So you may be temporarily put on a wait list until we get in all of the applications to be able to determine who's on priority level and who is not on a priority level, and your funds may be less this next fiscal year.</p> <p>So if you have any questions about that, let me know. But I will send out an email ahead of the release to let you know when those applications will be open so that you can get in and apply for those funds because it's a 1st come first.st Serve basis. When the funds are all expended. They're all expended any questions about that.</p>
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Upcoming Events	<p>Joe Bellavia-Children First Kickoff to Summer Reading</p> <p> Rawlings Library</p> <p> May 31st, 1–4 PM</p> <p> Hosted by the library and PCC Library — fun event for families to kick off summer reading!</p> <p>Safety Jam</p> <p> City Park (near Minnequa)</p> <p> June 7th, 9 AM–3 PM</p> <p> Free community event with:</p> <p>Bicycle, helmet, and skateboard giveaways</p> <p>Custom-fitted bikes for children and adults with special needs (via drawings)</p> <p>Children 1st will be present</p> <p>Event is well promoted on Facebook</p> <p>Community Baby Shower</p> <p> Praise Assembly, 2000 Troy Ave</p> <p> June 10th, 9 AM–12 PM</p> <p> Organized by CSU Pueblo nursing students, offering support and resources for expecting families.</p>
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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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Community Reports	<div>  Summer School at North Mesa Elementary  June 3–19, Monday–Thursday  8:30 AM – 11:30 AM  Open to District 60 and 70 students  Focused on language, literacy, and math enrichment Contact Angie for a connection if interested.  New Audio-Visual Podcast Opportunity First podcast episode featured Dana — thank you! The podcast now has a remote option—record from home. Open invite to anyone wanting to participate in future episodes.  Teresa’s Retirement Gathering  Today, 1–3 PM  Celebration for Teresa, retiring at the end of the month.  Provider Appreciation Day  July 31st  Free event to honor early childhood professionals To register, contact Jo. Last dinner held at Olive Garden; venues are getting harder to book due to high demand—future events may move to larger locations.  Next Meeting  July 28th (hybrid format)  No meeting in June (due to fiscal year-end closeout)  For any questions (from families or providers), contact Angie directly—especially for UPK-related issues. </div>
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Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at 11:58 am

Next Meeting
<p>July 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