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:	**July 27, 2026**
Time:	**11:00 AM -12:30 PM**
Location:	**Hybrid via Zoom (SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor)**
Recorded By:	**Paula Arellano**

Attendees:	
Appel, Katrina: CO Blue Sky *(Virtual)*	Lopez-Ferguson, Gina: CFC *(Virtual)*
Chavez Conteras, Maria: Catholic Charities *(Virtual)*	Palma, Mari: *ECEMES (Virtual)*
Hall, Darla: Children First/PECC *(Virtual)*	Perdo, Berlinda: Otero CDS
Jaramillo, JoAnn: Trinity *(Virtual)*	Rodriguez, Brenda: ESCCC
Johnson, Hunter: Children First/PECC	Salvador, Donna: ESCCC
Lopez, Emilee: CPLC *(Virtual)*	Shehorn, Angie: Children First/PECC
Velasquez, Angelina: Otero CDS	

Agenda

Introductions:	**Meeting called to order by Angie at 11:00 am.**
Additions to Agenda:	**None**
Approval of Minutes:	**April and May Approved**

New Business	
Agency Highlights	**<u>Maya Gould, Vice President of Research, Colorado Children's Campaign</u>** **Maya Gould presented highlights from the Colorado Children's Campaign Kids Count report, focusing on child wellbeing trends in Colorado and Pueblo County. The presentation covered economic security, child welfare, early childhood, health, and K 12 education.** **Economic Security** **Pueblo County has approximately 35,000 children, representing about 21 percent of the county's population.** **Approximately 21 percent of children in Pueblo County live in poverty, compared with 11 percent statewide.** **Approximately 40 percent of Pueblo County children are considered economically disadvantaged based on household income below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.** **The estimated cost for a family of four to meet basic needs in Pueblo County was approximately 80,000 dollars in 2024. Approximately 35 percent of households with children were below this level.** **Federal programs including Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and CCAP provide significant support to children and families.** **Child Welfare** **More than 12,000 Colorado children receive child welfare services each year.** **Approximately 40 percent of children served are under age six.** **Approximately 46 percent of children in foster care are placed in kinship care.** **Only about 45 percent of foster youth graduate on time, compared with 86 percent of all students.** **Early Childhood and Child Care** **Colorado has limited licensed childcare availability, particularly for infants and toddlers.** **Pueblo County has licensed childcare capacity for approximately 10 percent of infants, 19 percent of toddlers, and 72 percent of preschoolers.** **Childcare costs remain a significant barrier for low-income families. The estimated cost of care for an infant and toddler is approximately 40,000 dollars annually.** **Pueblo County had approximately 348 families and 524 children affected by CCAP waitlists or enrollment freezes as of July 1.** **The Colorado Department of Early Childhood estimates that 127 million dollars would be needed statewide to eliminate CCAP waitlists and enrollment freezes.**

	Universal Preschool has increased access and affordability, saving participating families an average of approximately 6,000 dollars annually during its first year. **Health** **Colorado continues to rank in the bottom half of states for children's health.** **Approximately one third of two-year-olds are not fully vaccinated.** **Medicaid and Child Health Plan Plus enrollment declined by approximately 10 percent in one year, while the uninsured rate among eligible children doubled.** **Approximately 70 percent of Colorado children live in areas without enough primary care providers to meet demand.** **Rural families may face significant travel distances to obtain health care.** **K 12 Education** **Colorado's on time graduation rate has increased to 86 percent. Pueblo County's graduation rate is higher at 91 percent.** **Academic achievement remains a significant concern. Approximately 60 percent of Colorado third graders are not reading and writing at grade level.** **In Pueblo County, approximately two thirds of third through eighth grade students are not meeting English expectations, and nearly 80 percent are not meeting math expectations.** **Significant achievement disparities exist based on race, ethnicity, income, and special education status.** **Chronic absenteeism has improved since the pandemic but remains a concern. Nearly 40 percent of Pueblo County students are not consistently attending school.** **Discussion** **Angela Shehorn asked about the potential impact of CCAP enrollment freezes and waitlists. Maya explained that children who are already enrolled generally remain enrolled as long as they continue to meet eligibility requirements.** **Maria Chavez Contreras asked about the household income data and whether the comparison was based on married or dual income households. Maya clarified that the data specifically categorizes households based on marital status.** **Katrina Appel asked whether Pueblo County's four-day school week could affect attendance statistics. Maya explained that attendance is calculated based on scheduled school days and agreed that comparing four day and five-day school schedules could be an area for further analysis.** **Resources and Follow Up**

	The Colorado Children's Campaign will share the presentation, Kids Count resources, and additional links with attendees. **Attendees were encouraged to use the Kids Count County data sheets and online data center for additional information.** **The Colorado Children's Campaign is available to provide customized presentations and answer questions regarding child wellbeing data.** **Upcoming Kids in Focus research briefs will address topics including third grade reading and pediatric access.** **Action Items** **Colorado Children's Campaign will distribute presentation materials and resources.** **Colorado Children's Campaign will continue gathering community feedback for future Kids Count research.** **Colorado Children's Campaign will consider further analysis of attendance differences between four day and five-day school schedules.** **Meeting Conclusion** ○ **The presentation concluded with appreciation to the attendees and an invitation to contact Maya Gould or Leah Caputo with additional questions or requests for information.**

Poll Results	**<u>Angie Shehorn-Children First/PECC</u>** **The poll results were reviewed, with 31 council members responding. Of those respondents, 74 percent voted in favor of holding council meetings quarterly.** **The council will begin meeting quarterly, with the next council meeting scheduled for October. Meeting dates will be distributed through calendar invitations.** **If urgent information becomes available between meetings, it will be shared with council members by email.** **Funding is available to provide lunch at each quarterly council meeting.** **No additional questions regarding the poll results were raised.**

Changes coming to Children First	**Angie Shehorn-Children First/PECC** **Children First Program Updates** **Children First provided an update on changes to its services and service area. Historically, Children First served as the regional resource and referral agency for 11 counties in Southeast Colorado. The service area has now been reduced to eight counties after two early childhood councils representing three counties decided to manage resource and referral services independently.** **Children First is expanding its support for students and families. The organization now operates a student food pantry and manages student pantries at the Fremont Campus, Southwest Campus, and Main Campus. Students may receive up to 10 food items and three toiletry items each week while the pantries are open. Children First also surveys students to identify needed items and works to provide a balanced selection of food, including protein options.** **Children First also manage the Care and Share food distribution held on the first Tuesday of each month. More than 100 families have historically been served at each distribution, which is open to members of the community.** **Childcare access is another area of expansion. Children First is working to bring childcare services to the first floor of the St. Mary and Corwin locations. The organization is also entering into an agreement with Trinity Early Learning to pilot funding for drop-in childcare. Depending on the results of the pilot during the next semester, the program may be expanded to additional community programs to help students access childcare.** **These expanded responsibilities began July 1, with additional services expected to be added in the future.** **Due to the expanded scope of services, the department has adopted a new name, Children First Student and Family Resource Center. The rebranding is intended to reflect the broader range of resources available to students, families, and the community. Additional information and a new logo will be shared as the transition continues.** **The student food pantries are available specifically to students, while the monthly Care and Share food distribution is open to the entire community. Additional information regarding services and distribution dates will be shared with the community.**
Provider Spotlight	**Angie Shehorn-Children First/PECC** **Two childcare providers were recognized during the provider spotlight.** • **Taylor Garcia, owner of The Tiny Tot Spot, was highlighted as a newly licensed childcare home located in Pueblo West. She has been licensed for just over one month.** • **The Learning Tree, Center for Childhood Development, was also highlighted. Wendy Romero serves as the program director. The center is located at Health Solutions on Taos Road and is currently rated Level 4 in the Colorado Shines quality rating system.**

Agency Highlights	**<u>Carlos Hernandez-Lakeshore Learning</u>** **Carlos Hernandez, Lakeshore's new statewide representative, provided an overview of Lakeshore's products, services, and support for early childhood programs and educators.** **Lakeshore has been serving the education community for more than 70 years and has approximately 4,000 employees, including 800 to 1,000 educators. The company operates three distribution centers and provides products, classroom design services, professional development, and customized solutions.** **Lakeshore offers free classroom design services, including assistance with layouts, furniture selection, and developmentally appropriate materials. For qualifying purchases of $25,000 or more, Lakeshore provides white glove delivery and installation, including placement of items and removal of packaging and debris.** **The company also offers customized educational kits and materials for areas such as math, reading, parent engagement, social emotional learning, sensory exploration, and school transitions. Customers can select premade kits or work with the Custom Solutions team to create materials based on their specific needs and budget.** **Lakeshore provides professional development opportunities, including training in social emotional learning and the Pyramid Model, and can customize training for individual organizations.** **Carlos also highlighted the Lakeshore Denver store and invited council members and educators to visit the store. Lakeshore can arrange private shopping events, professional demonstrations, giveaways, and other opportunities for educators and community partners.** **Discussion and Follow Up** **Brenda from Eastside Child Care Center shared a positive experience using Lakeshore's classroom design services, noting that the company designed the classroom based on measurements provided, completed the installation, and removed the packaging.** **Angela Shehorn noted that she had been selected for a Lakeshore pilot program to provide feedback on materials but had not yet received the materials. Carlos requested that Angela email him so he could follow up and provide an update.** **Carlos and Angela discussed providing door prizes or giveaways to meeting attendees. Angela will provide Carlos with the attendee list so Lakeshore can contact participants regarding the drawings.** **Carlos encouraged attendees to contact him directly with questions, feedback, or future opportunities to partner with Lakeshore.** **The presentation concluded with appreciation to Carlos for participating in and providing information about Lakeshore's resources and services.**

Community Reports	**<u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u>** **Members were invited to share program updates and upcoming community events.** **An upcoming program beginning August 1 was announced, although additional details were not provided during the discussion.** **A Colorado Pyramid Model training will be offered virtually from September 2 through October 15. Additional information will be distributed to interested participants. Members with questions or who need additional information were encouraged to reach out for assistance.** **Maria Chavez Contreras announced that the HIPPY program will hold its annual enrollment day at the zoo on September 10. Flyers are being finalized and will be distributed for community partners to share with eligible families.** **The Parents as Teachers program is also currently accepting enrollments. The program has certified staff available and is accepting referrals of eligible families.**

Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at 12:26 PM

Next Meeting
October26, 2026 **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://cccs-edu.zoom.us/j/83649820790?pwd=UXeIPStoXkRk2FQBy3m7alPVM4555u.1** **Meeting ID: 836 4982 0790** **Passcode: 767195** **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