



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 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:	
Appel, Katrina: Colorado Blue Sky	Gallegos Casanova, Gerald: Health Solutions (virtual)
Bellavia, Joe: Children First/PECC	Romero, Wendy: Health Solutions (virtual)
Bellavia, Rebecca: Children First/PECC	Richardson, Vanessa: LCA (virtual)
Guy, Matt: SECC	Duskey-Kochis, Rhonda: CPLC (virtual)
Hall, Darla: Children First/PECC	Lopez, Emilee: CPLC (virtual)
Hopkins, Alyssa: Early Head Start	Torres, Monica: CPLC (virtual)
Johnson, Hunter: Children First/PECC	Keasling, Cindy: D70 (virtual)
Montoya, Ryan: Children First/PECC	Carrero-Segura, Anna: SSCC 2 (virtual)
Pedro, Berlinda: Otero Jr. College	Hopewell, Christina: PDPHE (virtual)
Rodriguez, Brenda: ESCCC	Mohar, Randi: PDPHE (virtual)
Salvador, Donna: ESCCC	Kennedy, Arlene: SSCC 1 (virtual)
Shehorn, Angie: Children First/PECC	Pacheco, Cynthia: CPLC (virtual)
Velasquez, Angelina: Otero Jr. College	Martinez, Dwanette: Migrant Education (virtual)
Flores, Pam: PDPHE (virtual)	Lopez-Ferguson, Gina: Caring4Colorado (virtual)
Palma, Mari: ECEMES (virtual)	Richardson, Dana: LCA (virtual)

Agenda

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

New Business

SECC Update	<p><u>Matt Guy</u></p> <p>1. Resource Guide Ready for Release:</p> <p>A 12-page comprehensive list of early childhood enrichment opportunities in Pablo County is finalized.</p> <p>It includes a wide range of activities and resources: zoos, museums, state parks, music lessons, physical activities, and more.</p> <p>Will be published on the Children Free website and printed for distribution.</p> <hr/> <p>2. New Suspension/Expulsion Data:</p> <p>New state data shows suspension and expulsion figures by school district, age, and reason.</p> <p>Not yet shared with the coalition.</p> <p>Preliminary finding: No early childhood suspensions or expulsions reported for the 2023–2024 school year, according to submitted data.</p>
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UPK Update	<p><u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u></p> <p>Application and Enrollment Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total 4-year-olds eligible for Universal Preschool (UPK): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 6-county region: 2,153 ◦ Pueblo County: 1,683 • Applications submitted so far (2025–2026 school year): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1,516 total ◦ 418 still in progress (not yet submitted; may include duplicates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 347 of those incomplete applications are in Pueblo ▪ Ryan and the team will follow up with these families • Remaining unmatched applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Approximately 70+ are still being worked through • Seats already secured: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1,007 children in total ◦ 768 in Pueblo County <p>Provider Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total UPK providers: 88 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 66 located in Pueblo • Some new providers added, but several chose not to continue • As a result, the region will not meet the Governor’s goal of 95% provider retention <hr/> <p>Support & Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only two staff (Ryan and one other) are handling matches and outreach—contact them for help with family issues or application problems • Currently, about 70% of eligible children have secure seats, which is a positive milestone <hr/> <p>Questions & Discussion Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D60/D70 School Registration Confusion:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families struggle to find centralized information about back-to-school nights or registration ○ Advocates often need to locate a child’s school and visit individual school websites ○ D70 does not coordinate all sites centrally—each school sets its own schedule ○ Suggestion: Explore making a centralized list on D70’s website • Registration Complexity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While the UPK application is now easier, school-level registration adds complexity ○ Advocates request better visibility and streamline information to reduce delays
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Provider Needs, Concerns, Celebrations	<u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None were submitted
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Colorado Children’s Campaign	<u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u> General Demographics & Population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2023, 1.2 million children lived in Colorado. • Pueblo County saw a 6% decline in child population from 2019–2023. • Some rural counties (e.g., Custer, Elbert) saw double-digit increases. Early Childhood & Poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 in 9 Colorado children lived in poverty (~\$30K/year for a family of 4). ○ Nearly 30% live in households below 200% of the federal poverty level. ○ In Pueblo County, that number is nearly 50%. • A family of 4 in Pueblo needed \$81,000/year just to meet basic needs in 2023. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Colorado average: \$93,000+ ○ Pueblo ranks among the top 20 most affordable counties in the state. Housing & Homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children experiencing homelessness doubled statewide from 2023 to 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ From 2,291 to 4,781. ○ Improved data collection (e.g., UPK application questions) may explain part of this rise. Health Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early prenatal care is at its lowest level in a decade. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In Pueblo, 1 in 3 babies were born to parents who didn’t receive early prenatal care. ○ Barriers: Lack of OB providers, stigma (e.g., drug use), overconfidence from experienced moms. • Tooth decay in 3rd graders has increased significantly from 2016–2023. • On the positive side, children’s health insurance coverage has improved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fewer children are uninsured. ○ CHIP continues to cover many. Childcare Access & Cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pueblo has the 7th largest licensed childcare gap in the state. • 247,000 children in Colorado have both parents working, yet 82,000 lack access to licensed childcare.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$14,850/year per child in Pueblo—one of the most expensive states for child care. • Many families rely on non-licensed or relative care, especially for infants and toddlers. • Universal Preschool served 70% of 4-year-olds in its first year, though some received only 10 hours/week. <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Pueblo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 67% of students (grades 3–8) did not meet English Language Arts standards. ◦ 70% did not meet Math standards. ◦ Despite that, 84% raising concerns about standards vs. graduation rates. <hr/> <p>Additional Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids Count books are available; contact the presenter or visit coloradokids.org to download or order. • United for ALICE (unitedforalice.org): Great data on “working poor” families in Colorado. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed ◦ Includes wage comparisons, survival budgets, household cost breakdowns. ◦ It shows early childhood professionals among many occupations earning below survival thresholds.
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Community Wide Screenings	<p><u>Ryan Montoya-Children First</u></p> <p>What’s Included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive screenings for children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Developmental & Social Emotional (ASQs) ◦ Hearing & Vision ◦ Working to include lead testing and well-child checks ◦ Future goal: dental screenings <p>Location & Schedule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held on-site at Children 1st offices • Begins September 5, 2025 • First Friday of every month, from 9 AM to 4 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ May expand to twice a month based on community need • By appointment only – scheduled in 45-minute blocks • Private, individual rooms for family confidentiality <p>Partner Organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPLC Head Start • Pueblo Department of Public Health (lead testing – pending) • Catholic Charities • Pueblo Community Health Center (well-child checks – in progress) • Vision Now (referrals for vision) • Young at Heart Dentistry (potential dental screening partner) <p>Process & Documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent, release, and intake forms completed on site • Parent/guardian always remains with child
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children 1st retains records for 1 year and can provide copies as needed <p>Staff Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children 1st staff will be trained to administer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASQs Hearing & vision screenings <p>Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryan is leading the coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryan.montoya@pueblocc.edu Reach out to him for questions or more details
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Upcoming Trainings	<p><u>Joe Bellavia-Children First</u></p> <p>1. De-Escalation Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented by: Gerald Date & Time: August 21, 6:00–8:00 PM (Thursday) Location: PCC Corporate College Registration: Available through PCC Corporate College (link on flyer) <p>2. Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented by: Johnson from Mariposa Date & Time: September 18, 6:30 PM <p>3. Pyramid Training Series</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates: October through January Schedule: Every other Saturday Details: https://www.campusce.net/pueblocc/course/course.aspx?C=60&pc=26&mc=0&sc=0
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Agency Reports	<p><u>Colorado Blue Sky / Early Intervention</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Statewide funding changes for early intervention are under discussion.</u> <u>First round of decisions is expected in December, with implementation on January 1.</u> <u>The first round affects admin and provider pay, not direct services (yet).</u> <u>Two additional rounds of potential cuts are anticipated.</u> <u>Local providers in Pueblo are at capacity, with telehealth increasingly used—creating challenges for service delivery.</u> <p><u>CPLC (Rhonda from ECD Colorado)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Ribbon cutting ceremony:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>August 14 at 4 PM</u> <u>Admin Office (Pueblo)</u> <u>Celebrating full licensure and official business status.</u> <u>Funding update:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Flat funding received for the upcoming year (no increase or COLA).</u> <u>Federal citizenship requirement under review:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Legislation may soon require citizenship verification for enrollment in federally funded programs.</u> <u>Still in 30-day public comment phase; no change in application process yet.</u> <p><u>Inclusive Play Project</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Launching a new mobility-inclusive ride-on toy project in September.</u>
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Toys will be modified for children with physical limitations.</u> • <u>Funded by private donors; the project is in development now.</u> |
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Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at 11:58 am

Next Meeting
August 25, 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 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,

Ryan Montoya