



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:	August 25, 2025
Time:	11:00 AM -12:00 PM
Location:	Hybrid via Webex (SMC Conference Room on the Third Floor)
Recorded By:	Ryan Montoya

Attendees:	
Alcon, Annette: CPLC	McAlister, Brittany: CCSOCO
Arellano, Paula: Children First/PECC	Milusnic, Molly: PCC
Bellavia, Joe: Children First/PECC	Montoya, Ryan: Children First/PECC
Bellavia, Rebecca: Children First/PECC	Shehorn, Angie: Children First/PECC
Chavez, Dominique: United Way of Pueblo	Torres, Monica: CPLC (virtual)
Chavez, Maria: Catholic Charities	Rodriguez, Brenda: ESCCC (virtual)
Duskey, Rhonda: CPLC	Medina, Nancy: D60 (virtual)
Garcia, Erics: CCSOCO	Gallegos Casanova, Gerald: Health Solutions (virtual)
Guy, Matt: SECC	Salvadore, Donna: ESCCC (virtual)
Hall, Darla: Children First/PECC	Lopez Ferguson, Gina: Caring for Colorado (virtual)
Johnson, Hunter: Children First/PECC	Mohar, Randi: PDPHE
Lopez, Emilee: CPLC	

Agenda

Introductions:	Meeting called to order by Angie at 11:00 am.
Additions to Agenda:	Update on CTC Quality Child Care and asks to add it to the agenda
Approval of Minutes:	Approved. Correction to July. Children Free to Children First.

New Business

Dominique Chavez

Background:

- Originated from a need identified by the Child Maltreatment Prevention Task Force.
- Funded by a grant; Dominique was hired in April to lead the initiative.
- Built using the ALICE framework (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) to focus on working individuals who don't qualify for assistance but still struggle to meet basic needs.

◆ Hub Features:

1. **Online Directory:** Public access to up-to-date local resources.
2. **Centralized Intake Form:** One form for clients; referrals automatically sent to appropriate agencies.
3. **Coordinated Case Management:** Agencies (e.g., Catholic Charities, Posada) can collaborate on client services and share notes.
4. **Community Resource Database:** Includes nonprofits and some for-profits (nonprofits can access full features for free).
5. **Paper Resource Guides:** For those who are not tech-savvy.
6. **Levels of Engagement:** Self-serve (like 2-1-1), partial support, or full case management.

◆ Goals:

- Increase efficiency, reduce duplication, and improve client outcomes.
- Ensure equitable access to services regardless of income or tech literacy.
- Collaborate with agencies to keep data current and comprehensive.

◆ Collaboration Invitation:

- 30+ agencies already contributing data.
- United Way invites others to review and suggest additions to the resource database.
- Monthly collaboration meetings will address specific resource types and tough cases.
 - Next meeting: September 10th, 9:30 AM at Pueblo United Way.

◆ Success Story Shared:

A collaborative effort across multiple agencies helped a developmentally disabled couple experiencing homelessness. Agencies helped with:

- Transportation
- Housing applications
- Financial services
- Employment
- Advocacy and service re-enrollment

◆ Other Resources Discussed:

- **My Friend Ben:** A tool to pre-check eligibility for DHS programs (SNAP, TANF, etc.); will integrate with Hub.
 - Info session on September 8th.

◆ Q&A Highlights:

- **Referral Priority:** Clients will choose which agency to be referred to.
- **Inclusion Criteria:** Year 1 includes all Pueblo resources; only nonprofits can access full case management tools. For-profits may be added later, possibly with a fee.

Agency
Highlight

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Contact Info: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email to join collaboration or view the database: resources@pueblounitedway.org
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SECC Update	<p><u>Matt Guy</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conference & Overlapping Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At the April CSU Pueblo conference, Dr. Lisa Roy demonstrated a tool similar to one already in use by another community member. This reflects overlapping early childhood resources being used across agencies. Parent & Provider Survey (Year 4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launch Date: Targeted for late October. ○ Provider Survey: Will be conducted online with help from Early Childhood Council and Children First. ○ Parent Survey: Will likely be paper-only this year due to past online spam issues. ○ Distribution: Still being planned; discussions ongoing on how to distribute effectively via trusted agencies. ○ Response Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providers: 30–40 responses ▪ Parents: Aim for 500 responses for stronger representation Early Childhood Enrichment Program Resource Guide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Completed and shared in PDF with the Coalition. ○ Will be posted on the Children First and CO Dept. of Public Health & Environment websites. ○ A small number of printed copies will be distributed at key community locations (e.g., libraries, WIC, Catholic Charities). New Focus Area: "Extra Needs" Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targeting support for children with developmental, behavioral, or physical challenges. ○ Goal: Build a resource list for screenings and services to support kids transitioning to kindergarten (e.g., 504 plans, IEPs). ○ Request: Community is asked to contribute suggestions for relevant services. ○ Many families feel isolated ("in the desert") when seeking help—this aims to close that gap. Event Promotion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Mariposa Center for Safety's "Tribute to Women"</i>: October 11th at the Carriage House, a dance and advocacy event. Challenges Noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survey data collection, especially from parents, is difficult to manage and control. ○ Need for more targeted, secure outreach to avoid issues like spam
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UPK	<p><u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u></p> <p>Ongoing Enrollment Work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryan and Angie are working hard to place children who are still unassigned to preschool seats. • Delays are being caused by incorrectly marked IEP status on applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some parents are checking that their child has an IEP when they don't.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This may be due to misunderstanding or anticipation of future needs.○ When marked incorrectly, it locks the application and requires state intervention to fix, delaying placement. <p>Important Note for Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Only mark IEP if the child currently has an official IEP.● Mislabeling causes unnecessary delays and prevents children from starting preschool on time. <p>Paper Applications Coming Soon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● A paper version of the UPK application is expected soon (no exact date yet).● Intended for families who are not tech-savvy or for use at in-person events.● Paper forms will require more permissions and verification, making them more complex to process. <p>Availability of Seats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Not all programs are full—some have open seats.● Placement depends on compatibility (e.g., comfort with home-based providers).● Some families are choosing to remain on waitlists for specific programs. <p>State System Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● The state tool that determines whether a child is eligible for 15 or 30 hours per week is currently malfunctioning, leaving some families in limbo.● This adds complexity to placing children in full-day or part-day programs. <p>Head Start Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Once licensing is completed, Head Start enrollment will begin—this is expected to help significantly with placements. <p>Terminology Clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● The state uses UPK for public communication.● UPP is used for contracts and backend processes.● Both acronyms are in use, though it may be confusing.
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Needs, Concerns, Celebrations	<p><u>Angie Shehorn-Children First</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Key Needs & Ongoing Challenges○ Severe Workforce Shortage:○ A consistent and widespread concern across Pueblo and 10 surrounding counties.○ Programs need qualified staff.○ Burnout is high; many are leaving the field.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Many home providers are aging out, and new ones aren't entering at the same rate. ○ Urgent Need for New Home Providers: ○ Community encouraged to recruit potential home-based providers. ○ Rebecca can assist interested individuals with licensing. ○ While getting licensed, providers can care for up to 4 unrelated children and earn income. ○ Concerns About January Minimum Wage Increase: ○ Providers are worried about financial viability when minimum wage rises. ○ Especially hard for centers trying to maintain staff and affordability. ○ Enrollment Uncertainty: ○ New providers are anxious about whether families will enroll in their programs. ○ Despite the clear need, cost and access remain major barriers for families. ○ Affordability Crisis for Families: ○ Child care is often too expensive, forcing families to: ○ Leave the workforce ○ Reduce hours ○ Work alternate shifts ○ The CCAP freeze (Child Care Assistance Program) has worsened the issue. ○ Higher minimum wages will make more families ineligible for assistance, yet still unable to afford care out-of-pocket. ○ Quality Improvement Funding (QIF) ○ Funding is nearly depleted. ○ Providers who want coaching or help preparing for a rating should apply ASAP via their Colorado Shines profile. ○ Priority is given to: ○ Providers who've never been rated ○ Providers actively pursuing a new rating ○ No additional state funding is expected once current QIF funds run out.
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ECE Update	<p><u>Molly Milusnic</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding & Financial Aid Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Many grants and stipends have ended (e.g., 1011 and 1031 stipends). ○ Students struggle to afford school without financial aid or scholarships. ○ Lack of funding discourages new students from entering the ECE field, which is already low paying. 2. Apprenticeship Program Delayed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A new cohort hasn't launched yet due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need for committed students. ▪ Financial limitations on paying instructors if enrollment drops. ▪ Need for solid employed partnerships. ○ The previous cohort had low completion (10 started, 3 finished). 3. Systemic Barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some students don't qualify for FAFSA or Career Advance. ○ High demand for affordable classes with limited funding options for part-time or non-traditional students.
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	<p>Good News & Progress</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Career Advance Funding Extended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over \$900,000 is still available. Students with completed FAFSA can still receive extra financial support. New \$67,000 UCE Scholarship Awarded (through CDHE & Department of Early Childhood): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers students not eligible for other aid. Will support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New apprenticeship cohort. Students take only a few classes. Students denied other financial support. Enrollment & Class Offerings Growing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 in-person classes offered (up from 5). Strong enrollment in key courses like ECE 1011 & 1031 (30 students). Online program supports students across Colorado. Recent Student Successes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring grads: 10 AAS degrees, 5 Director Certificates, 14 Teacher Certificates. One student is now attending CSU Pueblo on full scholarship and in the President's Leadership Program. Outreach & Advising Efforts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCC staff (notably the presenter) do on-site visits to childcare centers to enroll students. Offering direct ECE advice to help students navigate the system and stay on track. Strong Department Ranking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE ranks 3rd in the social sciences department for full-time student enrollment, after Psychology and History. <hr/> <p>Key Message: Act Now</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarship and grant funding is available right now, but once it's gone, there's no guarantee it will return. If you or someone you know is interested in entering the ECE field, now is the time.
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Community Wide Screenings	<p><u>Ryan Montoya-Children First</u></p> <p>First screening date: Friday, September 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screenings will be held on the first Friday of every month going forward. <p>What's Included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developmental Hearing Vision Social-emotional screenings <p>Details:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to all families (not limited to Pueblo residents) • Free of charge • 8 openings still available for the first event • Referrals should be directed to Angie or Ryan to schedule <p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizers are working with multiple partners to provide services. • They welcome resources to share with families at the event (e.g., information cards, brochures). • Materials from programs like My Friend Ben or other local services are especially encouraged. <p>Questions? Contact Ryan.</p>
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CTC	<p><u>Colorado Blue Sky / Early Intervention</u></p> <p>CTC Coalition: Quality Child Care Committee Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee is working to streamline the childcare licensing process in Pueblo, which is currently difficult and bureaucratic for both home and center providers. <p>Recent Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key agencies (fire department, regional building, zoning) met to address licensing barriers. • Despite some personality conflicts, the meeting ended with a clear process in place. <p>Step 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Children First — Becky, the Licensed Provider Navigator, is the go-to person for families/providers starting the licensing process. <p>Quarterly Resource Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospective child care providers can attend to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meet all relevant agencies in one place ○ Ask questions ○ Problem-solve licensing barriers • Meetings will be recorded for those who cannot attend. <p>Bigger Picture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a major first step after years of effort to reduce community-created obstacles to becoming a licensed provider. • Goal: Increase quality licensed child care options in Pueblo. • Acknowledgement that many young children are currently in unlicensed care, some of which may not be ideal. • Emphasis on collaborative community action to improve outcomes for children and families.
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<p>Additional Comments</p>	<p><u>Colorado Blue Sky / Early Intervention</u></p> <p>Evaluation Reminder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please complete the evaluation email sent by Eileen Dennis. <p>HIPPY Program Zoo Enrollment Day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Free zoo day for families who enroll in the HIPPY program. ○ Date: Friday, September 12 ○ Families register with Children First and enjoy the zoo afterward. ○ Event is open to entire families, not just the child being enrolled. ○ Info available on social media or by contacting Brenda. • Parents as Teachers Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launching virtual Parent Cafés in October, open to the community. ○ Topics include: nutrition, breastfeeding, budgeting, etc. ○ Looking for community presenters or resource contributors. ○ Check Facebook page for updates. <hr/> <p>◆ Eastside Child Care Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently has 8 toddler openings after classroom transitions. • Reach out if families need toddler care. <hr/> <p>◆ Head Start Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Received level funding for the next year—no COLA or increases. ○ Awaiting word on potential expansion funds, especially for ages 0–3. • Upcoming Advocacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff member going to Washington, D.C. in September for federal budget discussions. • Eligibility Changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Awaiting guidance on new citizenship eligibility memorandum from Office of Head Start. ○ Concern about how this will affect birthright citizen children with non-citizen parents. ○ Currently still operating under normal application processes. • Licensing Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Most centers are nearly licensed; final steps include staff files. ○ Mandatory trainings are completed. ○ Hoping for full licensure by end of September.
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◆ **General Notes:**

- All agencies acknowledge **ongoing challenges** with funding and staffing.
- Programs are open and **actively enrolling** children and families.
- Collaboration and shared resources across agencies are encouraged.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM

Next Meeting

September 22, 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=eDZvamY0UkU3Wjdsb3Y5Zm8wMzFKQT09>

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