

# ALLIANCE FOR KIDS QUARTERLY REPORT

## YEAR 1 | QUARTER 2

Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2025



**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2025-30**

Alliance for Kids, El Paso County's  
Early Childhood Council is housed under the  
Foundations program of Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families

# THRIVING FAMILIES

## GOAL 1

Strengthen families by providing parents with essential support.



### FAMILY RESOURCE NAVIGATION



AVERAGE OF  
870 FAMILIES  
SUPPORTED  
THIS QUARTER

During the second quarter, Family Resource Navigation continued to serve as a primary entry point for families navigating early childhood systems, with sustained demand for individualized, relationship-based support. The council received **870 family contacts this quarter, the majority of which (799 contacts) were related to Universal Preschool.** These interactions reflected ongoing family needs beyond initial enrollment, including placement questions, participation support, and follow-up assistance as families moved through the UPK process.



CONNECTED WITH  
28 MILITARY FAMILIES

**Support for military-connected families remained consistent, with 28 direct contacts,** underscoring the importance of navigation support that understands the unique transitions and access challenges faced by this population. In addition to UPK navigation, families were connected to a range of supports based on individual needs, including Child Find referrals, Child Care Aware resources, parenting supports, and connections to Joint Initiatives staff and external agencies such as Medicaid and DHS.



### OUTREACH + FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Outreach efforts continued to support family access to information and resources. Staff participated in **six family-targeted outreach events**, distributing **2,057 informational materials focused** on the importance of the early years, healthy families, equity, trauma-informed care, and child development. In parallel, outreach was completed with McKinney-Vento liaisons across school districts to strengthen coordination and ensure families experiencing housing instability are better connected to early childhood resources.

### FAMILY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHT PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Family Friendly Initiative focused on preparing for a **community-wide public awareness campaign** by intentionally elevating family voice and lived experience. FFI supported the collection of more than **130 stories from families highlighting the impact of early childhood education** on family stability, employment, and overall well-being. These stories are being used to shape messaging that reflects real experiences, challenges, and needs of families navigating child care systems. This preparatory work ensures that upcoming public awareness efforts are grounded in authentic family perspectives and strengthens Goal 1 by **amplifying parent voice, increasing community understanding** of early childhood education as an essential support, and laying the groundwork for more responsive, **family-centered solutions.**

# THRIVING FAMILIES

## GOAL 2

Increase families' access to resources and information to support them in successfully parenting their children.



### ECMH CONSULTATION

Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultation continued to serve as a vital, stabilizing support for children, families, and providers throughout Q2. Joint Initiatives sustained a consistent EMBED presence at one site, offering relationship-based consultation embedded within daily early learning environments. As needs intensified, the program responded by hiring an additional ECMH consultant during the quarter, with planning underway to recruit another position, reflecting both growing demand and a commitment to responsive, child- and family-centered support.



### EMBED SERVICES EXPANDED

\$125,000



To further strengthen and expand mental health supports, Joint Initiatives **secured \$125,000 in new funding to deepen and extend EMBED services** in the coming quarters. This investment will allow for more consistent consultation, enhanced inclusion practices, and additional support for children and educators navigating social-emotional and behavioral needs, reinforcing the program's role in promoting stable, supportive learning environments for families.



### ALIGNING FAMILY-SERVING SYSTEMS

Systems coordination remained a cornerstone of this work. Staff participated in **64 early childhood-centered community meetings** during the quarter, fostering alignment across early childhood, health, mental health, workforce, and family-serving systems. This ongoing coordination **supports more timely, connected responses as family needs arise** and **strengthens the broader ecosystem** that families rely on for support.

## GOAL 3

Increase access to a coordinated mixed-delivery model of affordable quality early childhood education.

# THRIVING CHILDREN

Quality Improvement efforts during Q2 focused on **sustaining progress and supporting programs** as they navigated quality milestones within the Colorado Shines system. The number of active **Colorado Shines Quality Improvement MOUs remained steady at 37**, reflecting current staffing capacity rather than provider interest. Demand for coaching, materials funding, and rating support continued to exceed available resources, requiring staff to prioritize programs approaching ratings, appeals, or other time-sensitive transitions.



37

37 ACTIVE MOUs

# THRIVING CHILDREN



## EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT

**Coaching and hands-on technical assistance** remained central to this work. During the quarter, **144.5 hours of GAE coaching** were delivered to support programs moving along the quality continuum. As a result, **11 programs advanced from Level 1 to Level 2**, and **six programs achieved new Level 3-5 ratings**. In addition, **\$12,979.38** in quality improvement funds were used to support materials purchases that strengthened classroom environments and supported program improvement goals.



144.5

144.5 GAE + CSQI  
COACHING HOURS



11 PROGRAMS MOVE  
FROM LEVEL 1 TO LEVEL 2



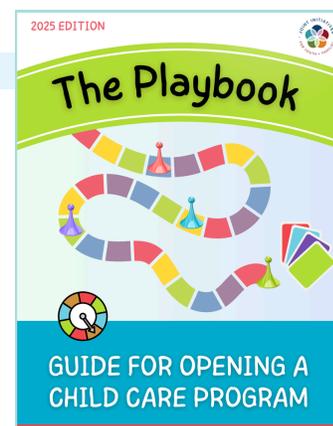
6 PROGRAMS ACHIEVE  
HIGH QUALITY  
LEVEL 3-5 RATING

## SPOTLIGHT | PLAYBOOK TO SUPPORT ECE



Joint Initiatives has been intensely focused on developing a comprehensive written **Playbook designed to support the expansion of affordable, high-quality early childhood education** through a coordinated mixed-delivery model.

The Playbook serves as a **step-by-step guide for individuals and organizations interested in opening a child care center**, translating complex systems into clear, actionable guidance with links to key resources and practical how-to tools covering licensing, financing, staffing, quality expectations, and ongoing operations. This work directly addresses a common barrier to increasing child care supply by reducing confusion and lowering entry hurdles for new providers, helping ensure that emerging programs are better positioned to launch sustainably and deliver consistent, high-quality care that expands access for children and families.



**During this period, the state made the decision to pause and refresh the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) due to ongoing funding limitations.** As part of this approach, programs already rated at higher levels were allowed to maintain their existing ratings, while available resources were prioritized toward supporting programs working to reach Level 2. This decision was intended to protect existing high-quality programs while directing limited funding toward expanding entry into the quality system. At the same time, the state began a broader effort to rethink how QRIS is structured, funded, and implemented, with the goal of creating a more sustainable and responsive model moving forward.

**While this pause has helped preserve current quality, it has also limited opportunities for some providers to advance within the rating system.** Continued clarity and investment will be necessary to support both initial quality improvement and continued progression over time.

# Needs

# THRIVING CHILDREN

## MORE HIGHLIGHTS

- **119** programs engaged in support to move from Level 1 to Level 2
- **11** programs that increased from Level 1 to Level 2
- **37** active MOUs
- **24** programs currently queued for rating
- **6** programs achieved new Level 3–5 ratings this quarter
- **144.5** GAE coaching hours
- **8** new or expanding providers supported
- QI funds spent on materials: **\$12,979.38**

## THRIVING COMMUNITY



### UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL (UPK)

**Universal Preschool** implementation continued to mature during Q2, with a **focus on stabilization, follow-up, and preparation for future program years.** A total of 231 early childhood programs were engaged in UPK across El Paso County. **Staff supported 217 providers with registration for Year 4 (2026–2027),** helping ensure continuity and readiness for upcoming enrollment cycles.



**231 PROVIDERS**

## GOAL 4

Facilitate the implementation of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) and promote UPK and early childhood education to the business community.

### FAMILY NAVIGATION



Family navigation remained a central component of UPK implementation. The council received 799 UPK-related calls during the quarter, reflecting continued reliance on hands-on support as families navigated placement, participation, and system-related questions. Maintaining accurate provider data also remained a priority, with ongoing updates to the Colorado Shines system to ensure families and providers had access to current information about availability and program participation.



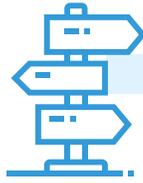
### UPK PROVIDER RECRUITMENT

Provider recruitment remained active, with **five new providers joining the UPK system during the quarter and an additional five pending or in process.** These efforts continue to expand access and strengthen the mixed-delivery model across the community.

# GOAL 5

Support recruitment, qualification, and retention of professionals within the Early Childhood Field

# THRIVING WORKFORCE



## WORKFORCE NAVIGATION + TRAINING

Workforce navigation and professional development supports remained in high-demand during Q2. Joint Initiatives provided **37 hours of targeted technical assistance to 43 providers**, supporting operational questions, system navigation, and access to resources.



277.75

NAVIGATION HOURS FOR 258 PROFESSIONALS

**Career navigation continued at scale**, with 258 early childhood professionals receiving 277.75 hours of individualized guidance. This included 45 individuals new to the early childhood field, as well as professionals pursuing credentials, employment opportunities, and career advancement pathways.



17

17 PROFESSIONAL COMPLETE CDA+ AND EARN 7 CREDITS

**A significant milestone this quarter was the completion of Joint Initiatives' first CDA+ course, with 17 participants** earning an additional seven college credits, supporting continued progression and qualification within the workforce.



169

169 PARTICIPANTS TRAINED 116.5 HOURS / 10 TRAININGS

**Professional development remained a key strategy for strengthening workforce capacity.** During Q2, Joint Initiatives delivered 10 professional development trainings, totaling 116.5 hours and reaching 169 professionals. Trainings addressed leadership development, developmentally appropriate practices, and staff retention and positive workplace environments. In addition, **15 individuals were connected to scholarships**, helping reduce financial barriers to continued education and credential attainment.

## Needs

To support long-term workforce stability, we must **expand mentorship and on-the-job training opportunities and grow partnerships with high schools, colleges, and workforce agencies** to create clearer entry points into the field. Finally, implementing innovative retention strategies such as wage supplements, tuition reimbursement, and wellness initiatives will be critical for keeping professionals in the field beyond their first five years. These needs will guide our focus for the coming year as we continue to build a qualified, supported, and sustainable early childhood workforce in El Paso County.

15 INDIVIDUALS CONNECTED TO SCHOLARSHIPS



15

Empower ECE providers and families to engage in public policy advocacy.

### FAMILY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Between October and December, **Joint Initiatives advanced systems-building and policy-aligned engagement through the Family Friendly Initiative** by supporting development of a child care Playbook for new providers, contributing to conversations on simplifying local zoning requirements for child care programs, and convening early discussions around a potential Family Friendly Initiative ballot measure anticipated to launch in April 2026. This work helped align partners around shared priorities to expand child care access and sustainability.



During the same period, **Joint Initiatives engaged with community partners, including faith-based organizations with inactivated space, to better understand the barriers and challenges they face when opening child care programs.** These conversations informed strategies to reduce entry barriers, support mixed-delivery expansion, and increase access to quality early childhood education for children and families.



**As part of the Family Friendly Initiative Public Awareness planning process, Joint Initiatives collected 132 stories from families, providers, and community members.** These stories reflect lived experiences with childcare and early learning and will inform future public awareness and policy messaging grounded in local context. This work continues to lay the foundation for broader community engagement and future policy conversations.

### SPOTLIGHT | REMOVING CHILDCARE BARRIERS



Joint Initiatives has also been actively engaged in conversations to **develop and introduce legislation aimed at simplifying local zoning requirements for childcare programs.** These efforts focus on reducing unnecessary barriers that often delay or prevent new providers from opening, despite strong community need. By working alongside partners to streamline zoning processes, Joint Initiatives is helping **create a more accessible and predictable pathway for childcare expansion**, supporting the growth of mixed-delivery options and increasing access to quality early childhood education for children and families

