

ALLIANCE FOR KIDS 2025-2030 STRATEGIC + SCHOOL READINESS PLAN

JULY 1, 2025 - JUNE 30, 2030



We invite you to view the 2025-30 Strategic + School Readiness Plan for Alliance for Kids (AFK), El Paso County's Early Childhood Council, housed under the Foundations program of Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families.

This is a combined plan that addresses El Paso County school readiness needs within strategic goals, objectives, and expected outcomes.

The Need

The need to improve quality and increase the capacity of early childhood education programs in El Paso County is immense. As home to Colorado's largest population of children ages 0-5, an estimated 46,863 children and growing, our community has 17,452 licensed childcare spots, enough seats for only 37.4% of this population of children. The majority of El Paso County is a childcare desert, with limited access and options for most families. Joint Initiatives estimates that roughly 70% of families would utilize childcare if the spots existed. To meet this need, we need an additional 16,935 more seats.

The AFK Early Childhood Council has operated under JI's auspices since the state mandated early childhood councils in 1996 (C.R.S. 26-6.5-103) and was one of 12 communities to pilot the Colorado Consolidated Child Care Pilot in 1997. AFK, through JI, has held the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) contract with the El Paso County Department of Human Services (EPC DHS) since 2019. AFK includes 23 representatives from community- and school-based early childhood education centers and partner organizations. JI's Foundations Program focuses exclusively on fulfilling AFK's strategic plan and supporting the area's early childhood education providers and families.

This plan was developed through a strategic planning session with the Alliance for Kids Early Childhood Council, which is inclusive of 23 members/partners including, but not limited to, partners at El Paso County Department of Human Services, El Paso County Public Health, school districts, family child care providers and families. Specific quality improvement work is outlined in the plan, highlighting how AFK will target and recruit licensed early childhood education programs that are rated in the Colorado Shines system, actively working toward achieving Colorado Shines system level two (2) rating. The below goals and objectives mindfully blend the strategic actions necessary to fulfill the legislative mandates for the Early Childhood Council, as referenced in Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) 26.5-3-101 through 26.5-3-106, as well as the requirements for ensuring compliance with the School Readiness Quality Improvement Program (SCRIP) in our community, as referenced in the Code of Colorado Regulations (8 CCR 1401).

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FOUNDATIONAL PLAN UNDERSTANDINGS

- El Paso County is geographically diverse, and as such, strategies must be tailored to meet the differing needs.
- All programming will strive to provide culturally and linguistically relevant support for children, families, and professionals.
- Local systems are family-focused and child-centered.
- Alliance for Kids (AFK) Council efforts are dependent upon community collaboration to identify gaps and barriers to successful system navigation informed by family voice and ensuring family choice.
- All strategies will ensure that mixed-delivery model and program adaptations will be made to meet the differing needs of providers.
- The distribution of quality improvement funding associated with the below goals and objectives will prioritize early childhood education programs that serve children with identified risk factors as required by the Code of Colorado Regulations (8 CCR 1401 1.202 B4).
- Quality improvement funding will be targeted to improve the level of quality at participating early childhood education programs, in alignment with the Code of Colorado Regulations (8 CCR 1401 1.202 B.2.b.(2)).
- A Memorandum of understanding will be executed with participating early childhood programs to secure the program's commitment to engage in the Colorado Shines system and improve quality, as aligned with the Code of Colorado Regulations (8 CRR 1401.202 B3).
- All data efforts will be spearheaded by Joint Initiatives staff. Council members will support external-facing data collection efforts to ensure effective community reach.

**FOR THE FULL PLAN, INCLUDING
EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND MEASURES,
SCAN CODE OR CLICK LINK.**



Full Strategic + School Readiness Plan [HERE](https://bit.ly/AFKStrategic-SRPlan2025-30)

bit.ly/AFKStrategic-SRPlan2025-30

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THRIVING FAMILIES

GOAL 1

Strengthen families by providing parents with essential support.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Hire Family Resource Navigators who work for Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families (JI) and/or are employed by subcontractors who provide support based on an advocacy model (not just referrals, but actually actively scheduling appointments, engaging on calls with partners, etc.).

OBJECTIVE 2:

Provide families with accessible information and resources related to child development through various strategies, such as digital campaigns, parenting classes, materials developed, etc.

GOAL 2

Increase access to resources, supports, and services that promote healthy child development and family well-being.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Increase family awareness of and access to resources that support healthy child development, including developmental screenings, early intervention, parenting supports, and home visiting services.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Ensure access to Early Childhood Mental Health consultation and supports to address the social-emotional needs of children and strengthen the capacity of families and early childhood professionals.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Develop and promote opportunities that support successful transitions to school for children and families, with targeted support for children receiving Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC).



THRIVING CHILDREN

GOAL 3

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

OBJECTIVE 1:

Engage in/support efforts to raise community awareness about the need for 16,000 – 17,000 more quality childcare spots to galvanize local action. To ensure school readiness, special attention will be given to increasing access to and availability of high-quality childcare for children participating in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, as required by the Code of Colorado Regulations (8 CCR 1401 1.202b(1)) and to the Universal Preschool Program for eligible children.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Support funding efforts at the federal, state, and local levels, from public and private sources, to support current programs in expanding to serve more children and to support the creation of new programs, with priority given to supporting current programs.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Encourage high-quality care by supporting funding and evidence-based initiatives that will increase the number of programs that become licensed, as well as the percentage of programs achieving higher quality ratings in our community, with special support for programs with families utilizing CCCAP.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Develop and begin implementation of a community-wide plan to specifically address the availability of care for infants and toddlers, matched with care and resources that families in our community desire.

OBJECTIVE 5:

Support early language and literacy, and numeracy development through coaching support, training, and community partnerships.

OBJECTIVE 6:

Develop strong ECE business practices by increasing access to resources, partnerships, training, and support that promote program sustainability and operational success.

OBJECTIVE 7:

Facilitate family involvement as aligned to the family engagement quality indicator within the Colorado Shines quality rating and improvement systems framework and Universal Preschool Quality Service Standards by providing information to providers and families about the 5 key elements of family engagement: 1) Communication and partnerships; 2) Family Support and resources; 3) Cultural and linguistic responsiveness; 4) Parent leadership and involvement; and 5) Transitions and continuity. This approach is alignment with the Code of Colorado Regulations (8 CCR 1401 1.202 B.2.b.(3)).



THRIVING WORKFORCE

GOAL 4

Support recruitment, qualification, and retention of professionals within the Early Childhood Education field.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Increase the number of qualified ECE professionals and new professionals in the field each year.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Support ECE professionals in increasing their credential level to allow for career advancement in the field.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Support the design of sustainable outreach and training within the ECE field to attract and retain ECE professionals.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Support ECE administrators to embody key elements of professionalism and to build programs with a positive workplace culture.

OBJECTIVE 5:

Support workforce retention strategies that address local provider and workforce needs.

OBJECTIVE 6:

Conduct Professional Development Needs Assessment to inform the Professional Development Plan, and based upon assessment findings, offer robust professional development trainings to meet the needs of early childhood programs, educators, and administrators. The plan will ensure alignment of professional development survey results and state contracts (such as EQIT) RFA Section 2 (2.c).

OBJECTIVE 7:

Support ECE administrators to embody key elements of professionalism and to build programs with a positive workplace culture.

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

GOAL 5

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

OBJECTIVE 1:

Increased awareness and understanding of public policies and issues that affect early childhood education.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Providers and families have opportunities to share their experiences and perspectives with policymakers, community leaders, and advocacy organizations.

