



# ALLIANCE FOR KIDS FY21-22 ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

## Welcome

***We invite you to view the FY21-22 Annual Report of Joint Initiatives for Youth & Families' early childhood program, Alliance for Kids (AFK), El Paso County's Early Childhood Council.*** The report outlines the successes in meeting AFK's Strategic Plan for 2020-21, developed by the AFK Council membership. Colorado legislation defines "Early Childhood Council" as a council established locally in communities throughout the state . . . that represents public and private stakeholders for the purpose of developing and ultimately implementing a comprehensive system of early childhood services for children in the community to ensure school readiness. "Early Childhood Council membership" are the members of a voting body of an Early Childhood Council with governing authority over all of the council's duties enumerated (7.717.1). Attached is AFK's report of the progress based on the Strategic Plan aligned to its accountability metrics (7.717.5).

## VISION, MISSION, AND SCOPE OF ALLIANCE FOR KIDS

### ***Bylaws Section 2.1: Vision***

The Alliance for Kids is dedicated to making El Paso County the best place to raise a child.

### ***Bylaws Section 2.2: Mission***

The Alliance for Kids serves as a vehicle, bringing together agencies and individuals to work collaboratively on a high quality early childhood system for young children and their families in El Paso County.

In partnership with families, this early childhood system encompasses children prenatal to eight years and includes the domains as outlined in the Early Childhood Colorado Framework.

### ***Bylaws Section 2.3: Scope***

The scope and role of the Alliance is to serve as the Early Childhood Council in El Paso County and includes, at a minimum community-wide strategic planning and financing of the early childhood system; implementation of new and review of ongoing programs/projects; and soliciting and overseeing funding.



# THRIVING FAMILIES

## GOAL 1

**OBJECTIVE 1:** El Paso County families experience ease and equity when navigating/accessing resources for their family's health and well-being.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Families and parents will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to be their children's first and best teachers and advocate on their behalf.

All families and children have access to the resources and supports to thrive.

### 17 CHILD-SPECIFIC COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

Deerfield Hills – COVID Event | Sand Creek Library – COVID Rodeo Dental | Lady of Guadalupe | YMCA Family Fun Day K-Land Festival | JI Community Career Resource Fair  
Community Night- City of Fountain | Dinosaur Resource Center (X3) Juneteenth Festival | Pikes Peak Library District 21 C  
Children's Service Networking Alliance Community Meeting  
20th Annual Early Childhood Festival - Ute Pass Cultural Center  
Fountain School District Family Night  
Pikes Peak Family Child Care Association Community Outreach

### 3 ACTIVITIES

- **Engaging in work to keep ECE programs open** so families have access to the care they need.
- **Staffing a Family Support Line** during business hours to assist families in navigating the resources necessary to meet their needs
- **Collaborating with key family service providers** through the Family Support + Education committee to ensure that services provided effectively pivoted from in-person to virtual supports and that parenting classes for families remained available and coordinated

**59** Families received **Client/Family Assistance** funding to support their needs.

**1** New program, **Child - Individual Service and Support Team (C-ISST)**, built to support families.

**2** **Professional development opportunities** offered to ECE business owners, highlighting culturally responsive family supports.

### ADDITIONAL SUCCESS



**PikesPeakEarlyChildhood.org** launched as a search tool for families in need of early care and education.

**FamilySPEAK.org** website offers **Kindergarten HUB** of resources for families and ECE programs.



**72** Calls received by the **Family Support Line** for assistance navigating family resources in our community

# THRIVING CHILDREN

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Children live in safe communities with comprehensive supports embedded and accessible to families in the neighborhoods in which they live.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Children are healthy and have opportunities for positive holistic development, nutrition, and wellness.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** All children are learning and developing and equipped with school readiness skills.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Children are engaged in quality interactions.

## GOAL 2

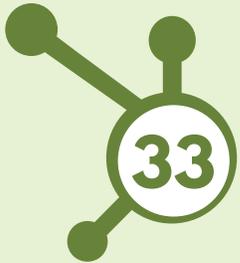
All children have the resources, supports, and interactions early in life to thrive in school and life.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS



A total of **328.5 hours** of direct Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultation were provided to:

**6** ECE programs receiving embedded ECMH Services.



An **El Paso County ECMH Collaborative** was created and meets quarterly to ensure a system of support.

Thirty-three individuals, representing 22 organizations, came together to discuss ECMH efforts in our community.

### OUTREACH



**Increased our reach** into the

Spanish-speaking Family, Friend + Neighbor (FFN) caregiver population by hiring a bilingual **FFN Specialist** to join JI's Foundations team.

**422** ECE PROGRAMS IN EL PASO COUNTY

**39** PROGRAMS ACHIEVED A LEVEL 2 RATING



% OF PROGRAMS RATED LEVEL 2-5



LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3



LEVEL 4



LEVEL 5



El Paso County reported an **increase of 573 spots** at ECE programs over the past year.

# THRIVING COMMUNITY

# GOAL 3

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Alliance for Kids builds on current capacity to organize, convene, and facilitate community early childhood services, systems, and organizations for effective and efficient delivery of services and resources to meet the individualized and collective needs of children and families in El Paso County.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** The Alliance for Kids Council membership and its network of community partners build an awareness and understanding of policies and legislation impacting outcomes for families with young children for the purpose of advocacy towards policies and legislative measures impacting young children and families.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** The community is knowledgeable and well-informed of the importance of the early years, healthy families, and healthy children as it relates to a thriving community and building quality early childhood opportunities in the community.

El Paso County is a community where children are valued and supported to thrive.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY AWARENESS & VALUING EARLY CHILDHOOD



**19**

The **Alliance for Kids Council** includes **19 members** representing agencies ranging from Catholic Charities of Central Colorado, CPCD...giving children a head start, Meadow Park Community Center, Pikes Peak Library District, El Paso County Public Health, EPC Department of Human Services, Peak View Behavioral Health, The Resource Exchange, to the local Family Child Care Association Vice President and a parent of a child under five. **Additional representatives engage in work through Council subcommittees.**

**50+**

More than 50 partners engaged in **Local Coordinating Organization (LCO)** work related to Universal Pre-K.



**730,395**

El Paso County's population is the largest in Colorado.

**46,380**

Population of children under 5 in El Paso County (This total is 15% of Colorado's population for this age group.)



## EC LEGISLATIVE WINS!

This year was another intense year for early childhood legislative advocacy – one in which much effort was put into creating the new state-level Department of Early Childhood.

The Alliance for Kids Council supported the following legislative measures:

- **HB22-1010** Early Childhood Educator Income Tax Credit
- **HB22-1006** Child Care Center Property Tax Exemption
- **HB22-1197** Effective Date Of Department Of Early Childhood
- **HB22-1295** Department Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program

**ALL measures PASSED!**

Promoted two advocacy training trainings for our community through Save the Children Action Network (SCAN):

- Training and discussion of the *No Small Matter* film
- Advocacy 202 for Grandparents

## COMMUNITY

### GOAL 3

El Paso County is a community where children are valued and supported to thrive.

## SOCIAL MEDIA | WEBSITES | E-NEWSLETTERS



Social media posts included advocating for the passage of HB22-12-95, highlighting supports offered by our Foundations staff, sharing partner resources, informing on the five protective factors for strengthening families, offering a hub of kindergarten readiness resources, sharing grant and scholarship opportunities for the ECE workforce, JI and community-wide surveys. Monthly e-newsletters (PD Update and EC News) summarize information necessary for the early childhood sector to stay informed.

**NEW JI Website:** Since collecting analytics in May, there have been **673 new users**.

**AFK Website: 12,880 users** (89.4% New, 10.6% returning) engaging in **27,505 pageviews**

**FamilySPEAK Website: 2,376 users** (90.8% new and 9.2% returning) engaging in **4,927 pageviews**

# THRIVING WORKFORCE

**OBJECTIVE 1:** The ECE workforce has access to community programs, services, and resources aimed at addressing the health and well-being needs of the ECE workforce, essential to effectively supporting children and families.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Engage community partners in the El Paso County Early Childhood Workforce Taskforce to develop and implement local solutions to address the early childhood workforce crisis.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** The early care and education workforce has the skills, knowledge, and disposition to positively enhance the comprehensive development of children.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** The ECE workforce will be led by skilled and supported administrators who embody key elements of professionalism and will work in programs that are built upon a positive workplace culture.

**OBJECTIVE 5:** The early care and education workforce has the skills, knowledge, and disposition to partner with families to support the comprehensive growth of their children.

# GOAL 4

All members of the El Paso County early care and education workforce have access to the resources and supports needed to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, health, and wellness to thrive.

## CAREER NAVIGATION

1,556

Jl's two Career Navigators have assisted **85 professionals** with their career goals for a total of **1,556 career navigation hours** provided. These sessions include individualized support and help remove barriers to advancing in the ECE field.

72%

Progress toward certification, degree, or other educational milestone was achieved by **72%** of professionals receiving career navigation support.

7

Through the **Earn + Learn Model**, **seven laptops** were provided to candidates completing their Child Development Associate.

35

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



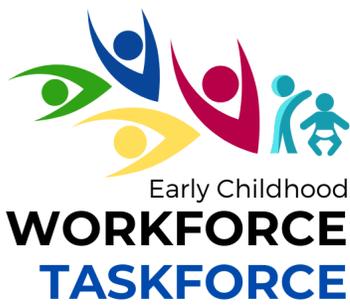
#### ANNUAL PD NEEDS ASSESSMENTS SURVEY:

Providers in El Paso, Elbert, and Teller Counties were most interested in the following topics: Child Growth and Development (selected by 66% of respondents), Child Observation and Assessment (selected by 46% of respondents), and Guidance (also selected by 46% of respondents). As such, we included training covering these three topics in our professional development calendar over the fiscal year.

**SCHOLARSHIPS:**  
**\$42,099.45**



Supported early childhood professionals with scholarships to support qualifications, maintenance, and higher education.



Local action was needed to address the early childhood workforce crisis in order to have high-functioning administrators.

# WORKFORCE

# GOAL 4

All members of the El Paso County early care and education workforce have access to the resources and supports needed to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, health, and wellness to thrive.

30+

In December 2020, the **El Paso County Early Childhood Workforce Taskforce** was convened with over 30 local partners collaborating to address the workforce crisis.

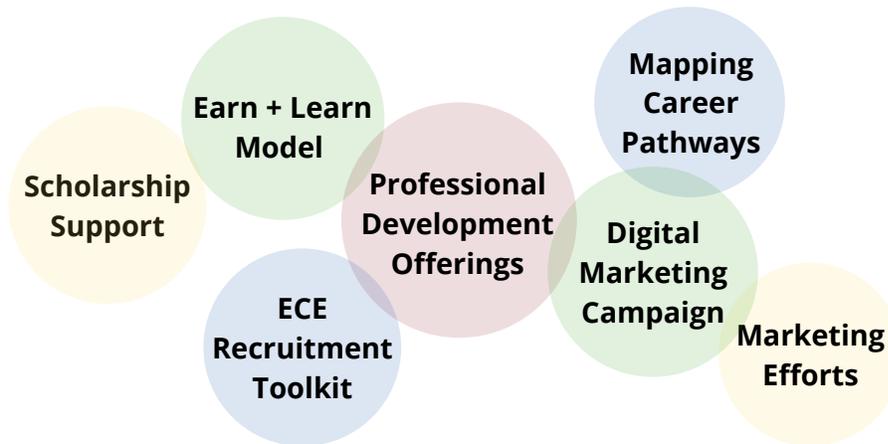
88

## WORKFORCE TASKFORCE MEETINGS



## TASKFORCE WORKING GROUPS

Community-Level Systems Building Efforts:



The **BuildMyECECareer.com website** has gained **11,369 sessions** (August 1, 2021 - June 8, 2022), with users spending a combined total of almost **31 hours** on the site.

# ANNUAL REPORT NARRATIVE

ALLIANCE FOR KIDS FY21-22 ANNUAL REPORT | JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022

**The 2021-2022 fiscal year was one of great growth and forward momentum for the early childhood scope of work at Joint Initiatives (JI).** Progress made in all four areas moved us not only closer to reaching the lofty goals set forth by the Alliance for Kids (AFK) Early Childhood Council, but also aligned with the marked forward progress and change that took place in the field of early childhood at the state-level. Expanded partnerships, funding opportunities, and local stakeholder engagement have been a cornerstone of our work as we collectively strive to reach the goals set forth to ensure thriving families, thriving children, a thriving community, and a thriving early childhood education workforce in El Paso County (EPC).

**As families in our area navigate entering post-pandemic life, access to resources related to family health and well-being has been at the forefront of our work, as well as engaging with families to ensure they have access to information needed to be their children's first and best teachers and advocate on their behalf.** Joint Initiatives provided resource navigation through the Family Support Line, providing support to seventy-two families to assist with securing housing and rental assistance, early childhood education, mental health support, legal support, and parenting classes. The Family Support + Education Committee determined that more capacity is needed for resource navigation to adequately support families who often are not aware of the resources available in our community or have limited capacity to navigate the system to secure these resources. As such, funding for family resource navigation is being sought through grant opportunities. Additionally, a new program was developed for families call the Child Individualized Service and Support Team (C-ISST) to meet the needs of families, with children under the age of eight years old, with complex situations. This new model, built around the Collaborative Management Program model, invites community partners around the table to support the needs identified by families, assisting them in navigating forward to ensure positive experiences in the early years and beyond. This first-of-its-type model has been provided to six families so far, and outcomes include increased community connectedness and increased access to resources.

*Expanded partnerships, funding opportunities, and local stakeholder engagement have been a cornerstone of our work.*

**As a strategy to ensure ease and equity of early childhood resources for families, much time and effort was put into increasing infant/toddler spots in our community through the Emerging and Expanding grant opportunity, the Early Childhood Education Quality Improvement grant, and through community partnership planning conversations.** JI allocated just over \$779,000 in funding to support the expansion of infant toddler programming in our community this fiscal year, supporting 20 programs in making structural and programmatic changes to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. The result of this investment is 226 additional infant/toddler spots in El Paso County, offered at quality early childhood programs. Further infant/toddler expansion work was funding to partners in EPC through the CIRCLE grant, which will allow for an increase of infant/toddler programming through family child care Early Head Start partnerships. A family partnership resource library is in creation to be shared with all early childhood programs serving infants and toddlers, ensuring that all families are equipped with the knowledge and tools to be their children's first and best teachers and to successfully advocate on their behalf. Additionally, local family voice was incorporated into the State Universal Pre-K (UPK) planning processes, as well as local stakeholder meetings, and will further be enhanced in the coming year to ensure that children and families are at the center of all UPK plans made in our community.



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**Jl's work to ensuring that all children have the resources, supports, and interactions early in life to thrive in school and life has been centered around quality improvement efforts, early childhood mental health systems building, trauma-informed coaching and training.** Jl supported 87 programs in increasing and/or maintaining high quality ratings this year through quality improvement grants and provided 455.25 hours of quality improvement coaching as part of this effort. A total of 39 programs were supported in moving from a Level 1 to a Level 2 this fiscal year, and 34 interested professionals were supported through Pre-Licensing efforts. Additionally, Jl supported nine programs in gaining Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) fiscal agreements, to ensure access to quality programming for children and families in most need in our community. This work has ended our program year with 39% of programs meeting quality standards, 21% of programs having high-quality ratings through Colorado Shines, and 28% of programs holding CCCAP fiscal agreements. Jl implemented the new Family Child Care Navigation scope of work in partnership with The Home Network and was able to connect directly with over 100 Family Child Care Providers to support resources and technical assistance support, including filing out grant applications and navigating complex systems including CCCAP and Child Care Licensing.

*The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) system of support in EPC has grown substantially this year.*

**Jl has increased its capacity to support informal caregivers, knowing that many families utilize these settings to provide care for their children age five and under in EPC.** Knowing that these caregivers are often under-resourced and disconnected from a system of supports, Jl received funding to expand capacity to support Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers this year. In partnership with the El Paso County Health Department, a network of 37 FFN providers has been built, and wellness coaching provided to FFN providers through Jl's Fostering Resilience in Early Education (FREE) partnership with Rocky Mountain Preventative Research Center. Additionally, nine of these informal caregivers have become licensed providers through the support of Jl and are engaging in the work of becoming quality early childhood programs, as defined by Colorado Shines.

**The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) system of support in EPC has grown substantially this year as our community now has access to an ECMH call-in line, embedded ECMH programming, and home-based ECMH.** Jl formed the El Paso County ECMH Collaborative to ensure coordinated systems related to this work. Additionally, 56 early childhood programs have been trained in trauma-informed care and 197 coaching hours have been provided to embed these practices in daily interactions with children. This support has been vital to professionals and families navigating life after the pandemic, and consistently provides critical shifts in mindset related to high quality interactions early in life in both home and school settings. Additionally, the Health + Well-Being Committee, as well as 27 additional stakeholders, were engaged in a community assessment of early childhood mental health practices. This assessment showed community strength in the areas of local structure for early childhood mental health partnership, strong collaborative relationships, both locally and regionally, and the provision of ECMH in varied settings. Community needs were identified as continued intentional integration of diversity, equity and inclusion considerations, building connection between screening practices and community referral processed, and strategic respite care supports for providers. These collective actions not only ensure access to early childhood mental health within the neighborhoods in which families live, but also access to activities and projects that support the healthy social/emotional development of children.



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**Great strides were made in our community, gaining a wider net of collaborative partners to work toward making EPC a place where children are valued and supported to thrive.** Growth in this area was seen through expanded funding and scopes of work, successful early childhood convenings, legislative discussions and support, as well as marketing efforts to ensure that the community is well-informed of the importance of the early years, healthy families, and healthy children. Budgets supporting early childhood work have not only sustained, but have grown from \$1,264,203 to \$1,986,608 since July 2021. Additionally, eight Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) have been added to the Foundations team, and one FTE to the Research, Data + Evaluation team to meet capacity needs due to increased scope of work. Additional scopes of work added include embedded ECMH consultation; Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) network building; trauma-informed training and coaching; early childhood career navigation; workforce development; family child care navigation; and program support.

**Jl successfully lead stakeholder convenings:** 1) The El Paso County Workforce Taskforce, engaging 30+ community members in addressing the workforce crisis; 2) The Early Childhood Mental Health Community Assessment, engaging 20+ stakeholders in determining local strengths, needs and next steps to build strong systems of support; and 3) The Collective Impact Committee, working to determine collective goal setting and impact measure that will ensure coordinated community systems and prevention services for children and families. The AFK Council and Jl staff members engaged in legislative working groups through the Colorado Children's Campaign to ensure ease of advocacy support for the community. The Council supported four early childhood bills this year, all of which become law during this monumental year for the field of early childhood education in Colorado. Jl also promoted trainings through partnership with Save the Children Action Network to further build a network of local advocates. Jl actively informs the early childhood community of crucial information and has an average e-newsletter readership of 425-660 monthly. Jl posted on social media 408 times this year, and collective websites saw over 32,000 pageviews. Additionally, Jl is seeing an increase in requests for interviews come from the local newspapers and other media outlets, showing an increase in interest and value for the happenings in the field of early childhood locally.

*...expanded funding and scopes of work, successful early childhood convenings, legislative discussions and support, as well as marketing efforts to ensure that the community is well-informed of the importance of the early years, healthy families and healthy children.*

**Jl invested heavily in building a system for the early childhood education workforce to have access to the resource and supports needed to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, health, and wellness to thrive.** Efforts in this area included community-level systems building, marketing efforts, the creation of earn and learn models of qualification, scholarship support, and ongoing professional development offerings. Large-scale community efforts have taken place to address the early childhood workforce crisis, including the convening of the El Paso County Early Childhood Workforce Taskforce and related working group engagement. Over 30 community partners engaged efforts including mapping of career pathways in our community, development and distribution of a recruitment toolkit, and the implementation of the BuildMyECECareer.com website and related digital marketing campaign.



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**Collaborative work was done to create models of Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) qualification that allow professionals to earn these credentials while being paid during the typical work day, referred to as an Earn + Learn model of qualification.** This year the Child Development Associates Plus (CDA+) model was created in partnership with Pikes Peak Community College, allowing participants to earn not only their CDA degree, but also 11 college credits in 25 weeks. Additional Earn + Learn models are being supported through scholarship funds and two community partners are engaging the development of federally registered apprenticeships, further building supportive systems of onboarding and credentialing in our community. A supportive pilot project and related leadership series was developed, termed 'Wages + Stages,' and ten early childhood programs were selected to be part of this groundbreaking work creating positive workplace cultures for those in the field, with the allowance of Earn + Learn models of professional development.

*Efforts made by a larger network of community stakeholders, the Alliance for Kids Early Childhood Council members, and work completed by Joint Initiatives staff, allowed for collective progress on the goals set forth through the Alliance for Kids Year 2 Strategic Plan.*

**Jl was funded for the addition of two early childhood Career Navigators and has partnered with Denver Early Childhood Council and The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County to create and implement a model of career navigation.** A total of 85 professionals were provided with 1,556 hours of career navigation this year, increasing the support to those currently in the field and easing the system navigation into the field for new professionals as well. A total of \$42,099.45 in scholarships were provided this year, funding forward progression and qualification of workers in our community. Additionally, 35 community-level professional development trainings were offered this year, as well as four Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) series offerings specific to infant/toddler caregivers. The annual Alliance for Kids Professional Development Assessment was conducted, and future needs highlighted included child growth and development, child observation and assessment and guidance which will be offered in the next fiscal year.

**Characterized by swift forward momentum in the field of early childhood, dynamic local- and state-level systems change, and internal growth to meet system demands, fiscal year 2021-2022 has been filled with progress.** Efforts made by a larger network of community stakeholders, the Alliance for Kids Early Childhood Council members, and work completed by Joint Initiatives staff, allowed for collective progress on the goals set forth through the Alliance for Kids Year 2 Strategic Plan. As we look forward to continued progress in the year to come, minor changes were made to the Alliance for Kids Year 3 Strategic Plan to ensure inclusivity of Jl's new role of Local Coordinating Organization for El Paso County, Universal Pre-K and ensuring equity through wider community engagement. The completion of the goals set forth by community members is within reach as we head into the last year of our Strategic Plan, and the huge systems change to come will allow us to make strides toward actualizing our vision to make El Paso County the best place to raise a child.

