



ALLIANCE FOR KIDS FY22-23 ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Welcome

We invite you to view the FY22-23 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 2022-23, 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

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.

GOAL 1

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

FAMILY, FRIEND + NEIGHBOR (FFN)

42 EVENTS TO ENGAGE FFN CAREGIVERS

29 PLAYGROUP EVENTS

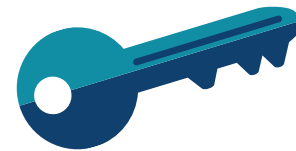
A total of 29 JI Playgroups engaged the early childhood community, including Family, Friend + Neighbor caregivers, in an effort to engage the caretakers of young children.

48 FFN CAREGIVERS SUPPORTED

A total of 48 FFNs are directly receiving support from the FFN Specialist who was able to conduct 12 home visits this fiscal year. Five FFNs participated in CPR training at no cost.

400 HOME VISITING AND PARENTING CLASS FLYERS SHARED AT EVENTS

12 FFN HOME VISITS



EVENTS

30 CHILD-SPECIFIC OUTREACH EVENTS

From October 2022 to June 2023, the Foundations Outreach Specialist attended **30 events** and handed out over **1700 flyers to families**, providing resources about the importance of the early years, healthy families, equity, trauma-informed care, and healthy children. A total of **450 social media posts** were shared across all Alliance for Kids platforms.

Five community events focused on holistic development, nutrition, or wellness included **workshops around social-emotional and cognitive development, healthy eating, and trauma-informed training** for parents.

ADDITIONAL SUCCESS



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

Allianceforkids.org and **FamilySPEAK.org** websites offer **Kindergarten HUB** of resources for families and ECE programs.



A monthly average of **39 families** called the main line looking for assistance including **child care support and Universal Pre-K (UPK) information**.

THRIVING CHILDREN

OBJECTIVE 1: Children live in safe environments with comprehensive support 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



1272 hours of direct Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultation were provided to:

6

Six ECE programs received **embedded ECMH services** (July 1, 2022 – January 27, 2023)

1

One additional ECE program received ECMH services as a sister site of an embedded ECMH program

259.75

Coaching hours provided to ECE centers and family child care homes to **maintain and/or increase Colorado Shines quality improvement rating**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

22

A total of 22 professionals were trained through infant/toddler training, including **The Growing Brain** and **Infant Toddler Trauma Informed Responsive Care**.

84

84 Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) training participants

167

A total of 167 professionals participated in **10 trainings** related to developmentally appropriate practices

JI SELECTED FOR "FIND" PROJECT

Ji was selected to participate in the **Filming Interaction for Nurturing and Development (FIND) project in collaboration with CDEC/EQIT and the University of Oregon team**. FIND was a 9-month pilot study to test the probability of an adapted version of the FIND program with educators of young children. FIND is a video coaching program for parents and other caregivers of vulnerable children. Eight EPC early care professionals participated in six weeks of professional development training and coaching. FIND uses video to reinforce and strengthen naturally occurring, supportive interactions seen between young children and adults in their lives. The program is strength-based and builds on the care provider's skills and strengths as well as focus on those Serve & Return interactions and break them down for the caregiver/parent. The FIND program has shown impact on caregiver and child outcomes, including: 1) increases in parent self-efficacy; 2) decreases in parent stress; and 3) improvements in caregiver-child interactions and child behavior. Additionally, families of the infants and toddler classrooms environments were invited to participate with the LENA Grow device which is designed to help infant, toddler, and preschool educators create equitable, healthy language by increasing conversational turns with the children in their care.

EVENTS

5

Five community events focused on **holistic development, nutrition, or wellness**

2

Workshops on social-emotional and cognitive development for FFNs

2

Playgroups included Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center nutrition lessons

2

Vroom workshops for FFNs

1

RMPRC "Garden Delights" Family Fun Workshop at Widefield Community Center about healthy eating

THRIVING COMMUNITY

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.

GOAL 3

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

JI PLAYGROUP ENGAGES CAREGIVERS



538 ADULTS

817 CHILDREN

Joint Initiatives partnered with the Community Cultural Collective to bring the **JI Playgroup Series to 538 adults and 817 young children at the City Auditorium** this fiscal year.

(These numbers are not unduplicated and represent the total number attending all playgroup events.) These innovative playgroups include music, literacy, movement, and school readiness activities for young children and their parents, grandparents, and the Family, Friend + Neighbor (FFN) community of caregivers. **Approximately 26% of playgroup adults are FFNs.** The groups were created to fill a gap in the community for high-quality early childhood programming, focused on early language and literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skill development, aimed at the FFN network of caregivers, caring for children five years old and younger.



PARTNERSHIPS + COLLABORATION

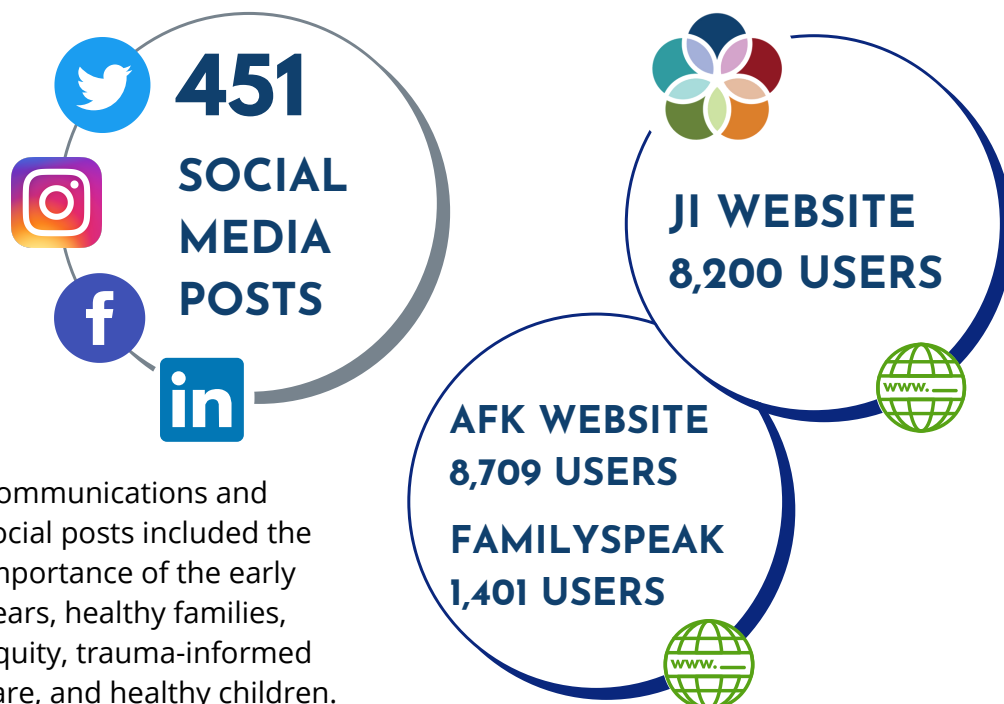
- A partnership started with **Pikes Peak State College** to offer a **NEW Concurrent Enrollment Hybrid Model** for all seventeen high school early childhood education courses. This model will help remove the barrier of not having an Early Childhood Teacher for each high school to offer the classes. The job component experience will be run by the school district.
- **TRE, JI, and Savio House** engaged in the **El Paso County ECMH Collaborative**.
- A total of **28 partners** engaged in the **EPC Pyramid Leadership Team**.

144

A total of **144 flyers** were shared at outreach events **informing on developmental screening, early intervention, and Child Find services.**

GOAL 3

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



Communications and social posts included the importance of the early years, healthy families, equity, trauma-informed care, and healthy children.

Website data for FY2022-23 (July 1, 2022-June 22, 2023)

- Joint Initiatives: 8,200 users (98% new/2% returning) and 28,241 pageviews
- Alliance for Kids: 8,709 users (90% new/10% returning) and 17,489 pageviews
- FamilySPEAK: 1,401 users (91% new/9% returning) and 2,809 pageviews

EC NEWS

740

AVERAGE MONTHLY READERSHIP

PD UPDATE

581

AVERAGE MONTHLY READERSHIP



The **BuildMyECECareer.com website** was updated with video playlists featuring early childhood workforce stories of success, and videos highlighting two young professionals and their early childhood journey from high school to working at local preschools. These stories were also promoted across Alliance for Kids' social media platforms.

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 support needed to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, health, and wellness to thrive.

CAREER NAVIGATION

674

Jl's two Career Navigators assisted **357 professionals**, with 14 of these being new to the early childhood field, for a total of **674 career navigation hours** provided.

94%

A total of **85 professionals were supported in meeting career goals**, and 94% of these professionals reported greater confidence in achieving career goals.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

11

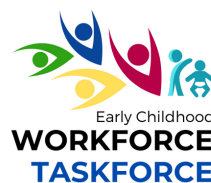
A total of **11 professionals** trained through **Pre-Licensing** (3 sessions).

22

A total of **22 professionals** trained on **staff retention and/or positive workplace environments** (3 sessions).

6

A total of **six leadership trainings** were offered, and **15 professionals** attended and trained on effective early childhood leadership.



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

TASKFORCE MEETINGS

Workforce Taskforce met in June and will meet again in August in an effort to address developing workforce gaps and barriers.

WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

7 The **Earn + Learn Working Group** met seven times regarding starting another Child Development Associate + (CDA+) cohort.

EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION

Continued intentional integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion when identifying and engaging potential community partners, recruiting, and retaining the workforce and partnering with providers and families.

- Increase opportunities for early intervention and child find screenings.
- Pipeline for entry into the field of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation needed
- Grow numbers of early childhood professionals trained in Pyramid and grow number of trainers and coaches in El Paso, Teller and Park counties

PD TRAINING + COACHING FATIGUE

The coaching numbers across the state were low during the first and second quarters. When asked about the lack of engagement in coaching, some ECE professionals expressed that they only had the mental capacity to engage in only what was required and absolutely needed for them to gain and maintain qualifications. In most coaching embedded trainings, the coaching is not required but is offered as a resource for those who choose to engage.

Additionally, with the shortage in staff, some ECE professionals there was a need to split up/combine classrooms during the day/week to maintain ratios for staff absences due to illness. This became a stressful challenge for the children, staff and families as they attended to the emotional needs of the children who were understandably upset and unsettled by the changes in their daily routine a few times during the week. Therefore, deciding not to engage in any additional coaching and trainings was at least one thing during the week that ECE professionals felt they had control over.

EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GAPS AND/OR BARRIERS

- The Colorado Shines rating timeline is still very delayed. For example, some programs that have been in rating queue for more than one year.
- There are requests for quality improvement (QI) capital improvement dollars that fall outside of Emerging + Expanding grant qualifications.
- There is a new requirement to begin a Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) Fiscal agreement regarding insurance and providers seem to be struggling with that piece.
- There is a negative impact to a program's bottom line to accepting CCCAP if they are not rated Level 4-5. It can be a heavy financial burden to accept children with CCCAP while waiting for a rating window to open.

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.

ANNUAL REPORT NARRATIVE

ALLIANCE FOR KIDS FY22-23 ANNUAL REPORT | JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023

The 2022-23 Fiscal Year wrapped up the final year of the current strategic plan with great progress. Great strides were made in all four goals the Alliance for Kids (AFK) Early Childhood Council set forth. Expanded partnerships, funding opportunities, and local stakeholder engagement have been the 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).

Joint Initiatives (JI) has continued to provide **resource navigation through the Family Support Line, providing assistance to 72 families, the majority needing assistance with navigating early childhood education and childcare resources, parenting classes, and financial assistance.** Through advocacy, JI was able to secure funding for two full-time Family Resource Navigators 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. JI is finalizing the development of a family partnership resource library 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 succeed successfully advocate on their behalf.

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, **JI continues to put effort 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.** Currently, the collaboration with the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, JI has engaged with 20 providers and potential providers in the first round of the Emerging and Expanding Grant – 13 of those applicants have moved forward in the process for state approval. An estimate of \$878,880 in applications was submitted to the state for approval during this first round of funding. In addition to building capacity in our community, **JI has embraced the family voice in the development and implementation of the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Community Plan.** The AFK council has expanded to include the family voice in the UPK Committee, which ensures and advises in the implementation of UPK in our community.

JI's work to ensure that all children have the resources, support, 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. JI supported 87 programs in increasing and/or maintaining high-quality ratings this year through quality improvement grants and provided 270 hours of direct coaching support. A total of 160 hours of coaching were directly related to early language and literacy development. In addition, a total of 246 hours of coaching hours were provided to professionals in our community focused on infant and toddler development and related best practices.



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A total of 11 interested professionals were supported through Pre-Licensing training and technical assistance, and of those supported, three became newly licensed programs, expanding local capacity by 24 slots for young children. **Jl supported 16 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 38% of programs meeting quality standards of being at least a Level 2 in Colorado Shines, 18% of programs having high-quality ratings, Level 3-5, and 28% of programs holding CCCAP fiscal agreements.** Jl continued the Family Child Care Navigation scope of work in partnership with The Home Network and was able to connect directly with an average of 183 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 system of support in El Paso County continues to be vital to professionals and families, consistently providing critical shifts in mindset related to high-quality interactions early in life in both home and school settings.

Jl has increased its capacity to support informal caregivers, knowing that many families utilize these settings to provide care for their children aged five and under in El Paso County. Knowing that these caregivers are often under-resourced and disconnected from a system of support, Jl continued to support Family, Friend + Neighbor (FFN) caregivers this year. In partnership with El Paso County Public Health, the network of FFN providers has grown to 48 FFNs engaged, 19 of whom are monolingual Spanish speakers or bilingual and speak English and Spanish. Over the past year, 12 FFNs have become Family Child Care Providers. Jl also collaborated with the Community Cultural Collective to host 29 innovative playgroups, based on the PBS Simple Gift Series, which brought music, literacy, movement, and school readiness activities to young children and their parents, grandparents, caregivers, and the Family, Friend + Neighbor community. The playgroups were created to fill a gap in the community for high-quality early childhood programming, focused on early language and literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skill development, aimed at the FFN network of caregivers caring for children 5 years old and younger. These playgroups successfully engaged 538 adults and 817 young children this fiscal year. Approximately 26% of playgroup adults are FFNs. (These numbers are not unduplicated and represent the total number attending all playgroup events.)

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) system of support in El Paso County continues to be vital to professionals and families, consistently providing critical shifts in mindset related to high-quality interactions early in life in both home and school settings. El Paso County ECMH Collaborative met this fiscal year to ensure coordinated systems related to this work. Six early childhood programs received embedded ECMH services in partnership with Jl, receiving a total of 1,272 direct service hours. Jl also received a Pyramid Training mini-grant to have Jl staff teach one Pyramid Class to providers as well as a Pyramid Coaching grant to provide Pyramid coaching to two early childhood centers in our community. Jl continues to partner with local community stakeholders to address building connections between screening practices and community referral processes now that the UPK program is in its first year of implementation.



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Jl successfully led stakeholder convenings: 1) the El Paso County Workforce Taskforce, engaging 20+ community members in addressing the workforce crisis; **2) the Universal Pre-K Community Stakeholder Engagement**, with 30+ stakeholders in determining needs and next steps to build a strong implementation plan; 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 supported three early childhood bills this year, all of which became law during this monumental year for the field of early childhood education in Colorado. Jl actively informs the early childhood community of crucial information and has an average monthly e-newsletter readership of 740. Jl posted on social media 450 times this year across all of its platforms, and collective websites saw over 48,500 pageviews. Additionally, Jl is seeing an increase in requests for interviews come from local newspapers and other media outlets, showing an increase in interest in Universal Pre-K and the first phase of implementation.

Jl continues to invest in building a system for the early childhood education workforce to have access to the resources and support needed to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, health, and wellness to thrive. Efforts in this area included **community-level systems building, marketing efforts, career navigation, scholarship support, and ongoing professional development offerings**. Career Navigators provided support to 357 early childhood professionals, for a total of 674 hours of support. Jl received a CIRCLE (Community Innovation and Resilience for Care and Learning Equity) grant in collaboration with Denver's Early Childhood Council, and the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County, to develop an Early Childhood Educator Career Navigation Model and to provide examples and tools that might be helpful for others to consider as they create Career Navigator positions in their community. This Council Collaborative developed a relationship-based career navigation model in collaboration with community partners to both recruit new professionals to the field, support those in the field to advance towards a higher level of qualification, and identify and help address system complexities and policy barriers. This best-practices model is now being looked at in an effort to implement it as a state-wide tool for all early childhood councils.

Jl continues to invest in building a system for the early childhood education workforce to have access to the resources and support needed to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, health, and wellness to thrive.

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

We look forward to expanding on our continued progress in the next strategic plan, including goals addressing Jl's new role of Local Coordinating Organization for El Paso County, Universal Pre-K, and ensuring equity through wider community engagement.

