

ALLIANCE FOR KIDS

ANNUAL REPORT

FY2023–24



July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Welcome

We invite you to view the FY23-24 Annual Report of Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families' Foundations program, which houses Alliance for Kids (AFK), El Paso County's Early Childhood Council. The report outlines the successes in meeting AFK's Strategic Plan for 2023-24, 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). Below you will find the Vision, Mission, and Scope of Alliance for Kids, followed AFK's report of the progress based on the Strategic Plan aligned to its accountability metrics (7.717.5).

The 2023-24 Fiscal Year concluded the first year of the current strategic plan.

Progress was made toward all five 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). How we gain funding is driven by our Strategic Plan. Our annual report reflects the state's scope of work and other scopes of work funded separately.

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



FAMILY RESOURCE NAVIGATION

Joint Initiatives (JI) has continued to provide resource navigation through the Family Support Line. Through advocacy and grant funding, JI successfully hired two Family Resource Navigators that 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 staff connected with 5,442 families needing assistance.

Twenty-six calls were provided for child care navigation outside of the Universal Preschool Program (UPK), and thirteen were referred to other agencies to address individual needs. The remaining 5,403 families were provided with UPK technical assistance and navigation. This high call volume, particularly around UPK, highlights the need for additional family resource navigators in our community.



PARTNERSHIPS + COLLABORATION

JI participated in conversations with other community partners to increase resource navigation, and several connections were made with organizations such as **Para Ti Mujer, Women Partnering**, and the **Department of Human Services** to discuss shared resources, provide training, and envision future collaborative opportunities. JI seeks to increase family resource navigation beyond UPK through partnerships with community organizations, such as **Colorado Springs School District 11**.

GOAL 1

Strengthen families by providing parents with essential support.



JI HIRED TWO FAMILY RESOURCE NAVIGATORS.



PEOPLE RECEIVING RESOURCE NAVIGATION



CHILD CARE NAVIGATION CALLS (13 REFERRED TO OTHER AGENCIES TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL NEEDS)



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Additional support from more family resource navigation would increase staff capacity to provide in-depth support to families such as actively scheduling appointments and engaging in calls with organizations in partnership with families.

JI will also continue to look for professional development opportunities for family resource navigation that will encompass the advocacy model, giving them the tools and skills needed to support families.

THRIVING FAMILIES

GOAL 1

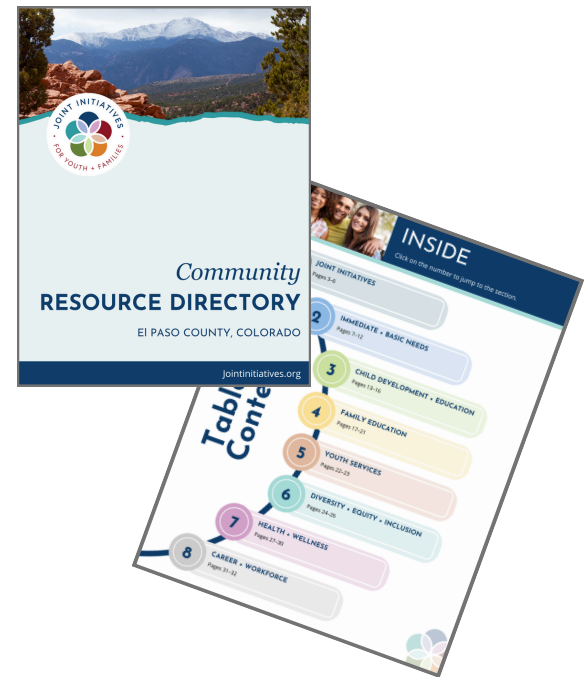
Strengthen families by providing parents with essential support.



COMMUNITY RESOURCE DIRECTORY

A Community Resource Directory was created and shared with community partners, and AFK council members, which includes resources for **Basic Needs, Child Development + Education, Family Education, Youth Services, Diversity, Equity + Inclusion, Health + Wellness, and Career + Workforce Navigation.**

Jl staff has received positive feedback from community partners regarding the Community Resource Directory and will continue to grow as more resources are shared. To understand the perspectives and needs of families, AFK can partner with local schools, child care centers, and other community organizations to understand their perspectives on the needs of parents and families regarding child development. Jl can continue to collaborate to reach a broader audience, by leveraging existing networks for the dissemination of information and resources through various modalities such as marketing campaigns, parenting classes and the development of materials shared with community organizations.



INFANT + TODDLER CARE FOCUS GROUPS

Jl also partnered with several leaders in the Infant and Toddler community to host family focus groups and better understand the challenges families face with securing high-quality infant/toddler child care. An **Infant + Toddler Collaborative** (ITC) team of eight members worked with a subcontractor to host two family focus groups in the community, and found that hosting individual events posed some attendance challenges, so the two focus groups were held during or after an already-established focus group.



FAMILY FOCUS GROUPS WERE HOSTED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES FAMILIES FACE WITH SECURING HIGH-QUALITY INFANT/TODDLER CHILD CARE.



INFANT + TODDLER COLLABORATIVE

- Jl's Chief Operating Officer, Foundations Programs Director, and Foundations Infant + Toddler Specialist
- Representatives from **CPCD...giving children a head start, Catholic Charities, Opus Creative Industries, the Pikes Peak Region Family Child Care Association, and Early Connections Learning Centers.**

THRIVING FAMILIES

GOAL 1

Strengthen families by providing parents with essential support.



FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

The focus groups provided opportunities for in-depth conversations regarding the challenges families experienced when seeking and finding quality care for infants and toddlers. The following themes emerged from the experiences participating families shared:



- Suitable infant and toddler care can be incredibly stressful for families.



- The combination of wanting high-quality care that is safe, affordable, and fits within a family's schedule is a significant challenge in our community. Many parents and caregivers face these difficulties, especially when trying to balance work, school, and other commitments.



- Families also expressed frustration when the hours of available care do not align with atypical work hours, making it difficult to find a suitable solution. This situation highlights the need for more accessible and flexible child care options that can accommodate the diverse schedules of modern families.



- These focus groups illustrated and confirmed the need for advocacy for legislative action to address the barriers that prevent many families from accessing affordable, high-quality childcare services. Legislation can advocate for funding to reduce the financial burden of families while also improving funding for early childhood educators, and the overall quality and accessibility of childcare services. Policies to improve wages, benefits, and professional development opportunities would not only support the well-being and retention of educators but would also allow providers to enhance the quality of care provided through children.

GOAL 2

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



EMBEDDED ECMH CONSULTATION SERVICES

Jl'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. This program year, Jl's two embedded Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultants provided 1,356 hours of direct consultation services impacting up to 310 children. Embedded ECMH sites reported a total of 40 children at risk of expulsion. Due to ECMH support, 43% of these children remained enrolled and supported in their early childhood programming.



1356

HOURS OF CONSULTATION SERVICES IMPACTING UP TO 310 CHILDREN

43%

% OF CHILDREN AT RISK OF EXPULSION REMAINING ENROLLED

THRIVING FAMILIES



TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING FOR ECE PROFESSIONALS

Thirty-one (31) trauma-informed care training opportunities were provided to 686 professionals. These training courses were focused on trauma-informed practices that equip the workforce with the skills and understanding to effectively support those who have experienced trauma. The Early Childhood Mental Health consultants provided support to staff, children, and families encouraging positive interactions to nurture healthy emotional and social development, and fundamental skills for social competence and positive conflict resolution for children and the adults who care for them.



TRAINING FOR FAMILIES

Two virtual trauma-informed training courses were also provided to the families of the six embedded EMCH sites, with six families attending in total. Engaging with families virtually posed challenges although it was the preferred method across sites. While initial sign-ups were promising, actual attendance was limited. Additionally, sites often registered families at the last minute, leaving them insufficient time to prepare. To enhance participation, JI proposes encouraging more in-person family engagement nights within centers, where trainers can provide personalized instruction.

GOAL 2

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



686 PROFESSIONALS ENGAGED IN 31 TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



SIX FAMILIES ATTENDED TWO VIRTUAL TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING COURSES

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.

THRIVING FAMILIES

GOAL 2

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



OUTREACH TO FAMILIES

Jl Family Resource Navigators and the Foundation Outreach Specialist attended family outreach events in which families were provided information around the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, Universal Pre-Kindergarten, and child care navigation resources such as Colorado Shines and the PikesPeakEarlyChildhood.org. search tool. Information was also shared about the importance of the early years, healthy families, equity, trauma-informed care, and healthy children with 910 families. Jl was also able to secure grant funding through the **Colorado Health Foundation** to continue the playgroups in collaboration with **Opus Creative Industries** to support the Family, Friend + Neighbor (FFN) network and to bring music and literacy to families. Although the playgroup is geared to engage FFN providers, parents are also invited to attend and participate.



INFORMATION SHARED
WITH **910** FAMILIES



COLORADO SHINES

COLORADO CHILD CARE
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

[PIKESPEAKEARLYCHILDHOOD.ORG.](https://pikespeakearlychildhood.org)

UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN



QUALITY STANDARDS FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Jl secured funding to enhance the quality of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs in El Paso County, aligning with HB22-1295 health indicators, particularly focusing on oral health prevention. The goals include collaborating with Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) to establish UPK quality standards and practices. This involves developing a collaborative of Child Care Health Consultants in El Paso County, to create and implement health-related standards, including screenings and family engagement. Additionally, the project aims to support 50 UPK programs annually in adopting holistic health approaches and improving oral health outcomes through screenings, referrals, education, and curriculum implementation. Strengthening local systems for early developmental screening and referral, alongside partnerships with healthcare providers like **Peak Vista**, is also prioritized. Furthermore, the initiative allows for the hiring of an Early Childhood Health Specialist to coordinate these efforts, ensuring effective program implementation and resource development for families and providers.



**PROJECT AIMS TO SUPPORT
50 UPK PROGRAMS
ANNUALLY IN ADOPTING
HOLISTIC HEALTH
APPROACHES AND
IMPROVING ORAL HEALTH
OUTCOMES THROUGH
SCREENINGS, REFERRALS,
EDUCATION, AND
CURRICULUM
IMPLEMENTATION.**

THRIVING CHILDREN



EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY INITIATIVES

Jl's Early Childhood Quality initiative focuses on ensuring all children thrive in school and life through quality improvement, early childhood mental health systems building, trauma-informed coaching, and training. El Paso County saw a 5.4% increase in high quality programming. This equates to over 150 children having access to high quality early learning experiences than at this time last year. This increase is particularly great when paired with the release of the new set of Environmental Rating Scale indicators which were released during the height of COVID. This year, Jl coaches supported 62 programs with quality improvement grants and coaching, resulting in 22.6% achieving Level 2 and 18.2% achieving Levels 3-5 in Colorado Shines. Coaching included 690 hours, with over 160 hours dedicated to early language and literacy, and an additional 273 hours focused on infant and toddler development.



PRE-LICENSING • CCCAP • GRANTS

Jl assisted 50 professionals with Pre-Licensing training, facilitated seven programs in obtaining CCCAP fiscal agreements, adding 128 slots for CCCAP families. Collaboration with the **Colorado Department of Early Childhood** engaged 35 provider applications for the Emerging and Expanding (E+E) Grant, resulting in the approval of \$626,306 in funding and 512 new slots, including 106 infant and 124 toddler spots. Eleven programs are on hold pending state funding. In addition to expanding early childhood slots in our community, the E&E grants funding enabled the establishment of a new center and supported significant upgrades for existing providers. Improvements included renovating playgrounds and outdoor environments, renovating indoor environments to meet the individual needs of infants and toddlers, purchasing high-quality materials to meet state standards, and enhancing safety features.



SLOTS ADDED

128

CCCAP

106

INFANT

124

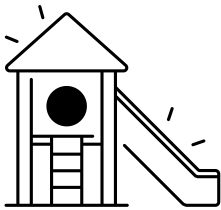
TODDLER

282

PRESCHOOL

GOAL 3

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



62

Jl SUPPORTED
62 PROGRAMS
WITH QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT
GRANTS AND
COACHING



690

QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT
COACHING HOURS



5.7% INCREASE IN
QUALITY PROGRAMS

5.4%

50

PRE-LICENSING
PARTICIPANTS

7

NEW CCCAP FISCAL
AGREEMENTS



E+E GRANT
FUNDS APPROVED

\$626,306

THRIVING CHILDREN



CCCAP SUPPORT + EDUCATION

Jl's Quality Improvement team supports new and non-engaged providers with CCCAP education and consultation, helping them integrate CCCAP into their business models to benefit young children and families. This year, Jl increased CCCAP providers by seven, adding 128 slots. Monthly partnerships with **El Paso County's Department of Human Services** focus on expanding CCCAP, sharing funding, and UPK updates. Sixty-six (66) CCCAP programs also participated in Colorado's Universal Preschool Program, allowing providers the ability to blend CCCAP and UPK funding, lessening the financial burden of families. Jl's Outreach Specialist directly assisted 107 child care providers with resources, technical assistance, and grant applications. Jl's Early Childhood Data Specialist conducts bi-weekly calls with 416 providers to update Colorado Shines information and provide requested support. These calls allow Jl to have updated information regarding availability of care in our community and update the state system to reflect openings for providers and families. During calls, providers requested information about UPK, grant and scholarships availability, and professional development opportunities, and were connected to the appropriate Jl staff member for further assistance.

GOAL 3

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



CCCAP PROVIDERS ASSISTED WITH RESOURCES, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

107



BI-WEEKLY CALLS TO 416 PROVIDERS

416



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Jl continues its partnership with **Pikes Peak United Way 2-1-1**, and they are working with our Communications Manager to ensure alignment. Jl has established relationships with our local school districts regarding **McKinney-Vento Homeless Education** and will continue to build relationships with their designated representatives. Jl has also partnered with the **Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center (PPSBDC)** to provide the Leading-Edge Series, a training opportunity for early childhood professionals interested in starting their own business. In addition, Jl and the PPSBDC co-hosted an early childhood provider event where new and current providers learned about topics that impact their business, such as Universal Pre-K, CCCAP, blending and braiding funding, and more.



PIKES PEAK UNITED WAY

MCKINNEY-VENTO



PIKES PEAK SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER



LEADING EDGE BUSINESS TRAINING



EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVIDER EVENT HOSTED BY PPSBDC AND Jl

GOAL 3

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

EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNICATIONS

Through our marketing efforts, JI is reaching providers and families via various modalities to all providers in our community. This fiscal year the following communications were distributed:

- 12 EC NEWS
- 12 PD UPDATES
- 111 FACEBOOK POSTS
- 142 INSTAGRAM POSTS
- 47 LINKEDIN POSTS

In the past year, Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families (JI) has maintained active communication through various newsletters and direct emails. The Professional Development (PD) Update reaches 1,482 recipients on average, with a monthly readership of 676, while the Early Childhood (EC) News is distributed to 1,653 subscribers and typically reaches 757 readers per issue. The Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Newsletter, targeting 627 recipients, saw 33 editions published from July 2023 to June 2024. Notably, these readership figures may underestimate actual engagement as they are based solely on email openings. Additionally, JI directly emailed early childhood programs 18 times to share updates on grants, loan forgiveness, tax information, specialized training, and to seek feedback through surveys. Meanwhile, the JI website attracted 13,743 users who generated a total of 50,599 page views. Popular pages included the JI home page, UPK, Careers, JI Team, Foundations, Resources, Professional Development, and Programs.



JI WEBSITE
13,743 USERS
50,599 PAGE VIEWS



300
SOCIAL
MEDIA
POSTS



18

DIRECT EMAILS TO
ECE PROVIDERS

33

UPK NEWSLETTERS

AVERAGE READERSHIP
PER EMAIL EDITION

EC NEWS 757

PD
UPDATE

676

UPK
Newsletter

347

THRIVING CHILDREN



FAMILY CHILD CARE SUPPORT

Jl continues the Family Child Care Navigation scope of work in partnership with the Early Connections Learning Centers' Family Child Care Home Network (FCCHN). The FCCHN assisted an average of 40 potential and newly licensed FCC providers monthly during this fiscal year, offering information on the licensing process, classroom materials and resources, background checks, business training, policies, procedures, zoning, approved training vendors, associations, PDIS, additional training, and financial resources. The FCCHN team frequently met with Jl staff to discuss collaborative support for FCC providers, including connecting them to coaches for QRIS training. The FCCH Navigators supported an average of 180 pre-licensed and licensed FCC providers monthly to discuss topics such as zoning, quality improvement ratings, licensing contact information, CPR trainings, background checks, Relationship-Based Professional Development training, Career Navigation, Medication Administration trainer information, scholarships, Coaching Credentials, Universal Preschool, and more.

GOAL 3

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



POTENTIAL OR NEW FCCH PROVIDERS ASSISTED



PRE-LICENSED AND LICENSED FCCH PROVIDERS SUPPORTED BY FCCH NAVIGATORS



Jl HIRED A PART-TIME FFN SPECIALIST



SUPPORT FOR FAMILY, FRIEND, AND NEIGHBOR CAREGIVERS

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 EPC. Knowing that these caregivers are often under-resourced and disconnected from a system of support, Jl continued to support Family, Friends, and Neighbor (FFN) providers this year. Jl secured funding for a .5 FTE FFN Specialist working on reconnecting with FFN's in the community. Jl also collaborated with the **Community Cultural Collective** to host innovative playgroups which brought music, literacy, movement, and school readiness activities to young children and their parents, grandparents, caregivers, and the Family, Friend, and Neighbor community. 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 Family, Friend, and Neighbor network of caregivers, caring for children five years old and younger.

These playgroups successfully engaged an average of 59 young children and 66 adults per month this fiscal year.



AVERAGE MONTHLY CHILD PLAYGROUP ATTENDANCE



AVERAGE MONTHLY ADULT PLAYGROUP ATTENDANCE

THRIVING CHILDREN



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) system of support in EPC 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.

Six early childhood programs received intensive embedded ECMH services, receiving 1,356 direct service hours. JI continues to partner with local community stakeholders to address building connections between screening practices and community referral processes now that the UPK program has completed its first year of implementation. At the end of this fiscal year, we were informed that ECMH Consultants would be taking on 15% of community cases, as funding for ECMH is decreasing statewide. Challenging behavior continues to be a top concern of early childhood educators, and is the highest need brought forth by kindergarten teachers when discussing the needs of incoming students. In order to meet this need, it is necessary to create programming and funding beyond state dollars, and thus JI has created the EMBED program (see EMBED details [HERE](#)) to work alongside school districts, hospitals, and college systems to create a highly impactful program growing both the number of professionals specialized in ECMH as well as the number of funded FTE to provide these supports to educators and families.

GOAL 3

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



ECE PROGRAMS RECEIVING INTENSIVE EMBEDDED ECMH SUPPORT



HOURS OF DIRECT CONSULTATION SERVICES IMPACTING UP TO 310 CHILDREN

THRIVING COMMUNITY



UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL (UPK)

In its inaugural year, Universal Preschool (UPK) in EPC involved 179 early childhood programs (69 school district-based, 80 center-based). Additionally, 30 programs operated as family child care providers. Of these, 66 programs accepted CCCAP as payment. JI processed 9,747 applications, predominantly for four-year-olds (80%) and three-year-olds (20%). Monthly enrollment averaged approximately 4,300 four-year-olds, with 84% successfully matched with a provider. This initiative also supported over 1,000 qualifying three-year-olds monthly, totaling more than 5,000 children receiving UPK assistance. JI received 9,747 applications for Year 1, with 80% for four-year-olds and 20% for three-year-olds. Notably, 57% of enrolled families had incomes at or below 270% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

GOAL 4

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



179 PROVIDERS



5,000+ CHILDREN RECEIVE UPK ASSISTANCE

THRIVING COMMUNITY



UPK SUPPORTS FAMILIES

Low-income families qualifying for full- or extended-day programs have benefited significantly from UPK, with the program covering most of their childcare costs. Since the school year began, UPK has allocated approximately \$2.3 million per month to support families of four-year-olds in EPC. Among enrolled families, 61% received \$591.74 per month in UPK support, 34% received \$473.54 per month, and 5% received \$1,046.99 per month.



MONTHLY UPK FUNDS ALLOCATED TO SUPPORT FAMILIES OF 4-YEAR-OLDS IN EL PASO COUNTY

2.3 Million

GOAL 4

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

MONTHLY UPK SUPPORT RECEIVED BY FAMILIES:

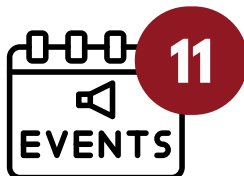
34% \$473.54/MONTH

61% \$591.74/MONTH

5% \$1,046.99/MONTH



OUTREACH + FAMILY RESOURCE NAVIGATION



5,403

FAMILIES ASSISTED BY RESOURCE NAVIGATORS

Jl conducted 11 outreach events to inform families less likely to have access to UPK information. Jl partnered with **CPCD...giving children a head start**, **Pikes Peak Library District**, and **Opus Creative Industries** among others. Family Resource Navigators provided technical and placement assistance, and community referrals to the 5,403 families they supported. In analyzing communications with families, 50% of calls were 1–5 minutes, indicating efficient and concise communication. Twenty-three percent (23%) were 5–10 minutes, reflecting a balanced engagement where issues could be addressed comprehensively yet efficiently. Approximately 27% were 10+ minutes, suggesting in-depth discussions and support. Navigators assisted families with small technical application issues, and more in-depth research of providers with program openings, facilitating smoother navigation through a new system that had numerous glitches and was difficult to understand. The navigators educated families around the algorithm used to ensure fair access to choosing UPK programs.

THRIVING COMMUNITY

FAMILY FRIENDLY CITY SUMMIT

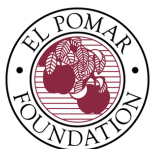
The early childhood **Business Council** was established through ongoing discussion with local business leaders to address the critical impact of child care on our economy in El Paso County.

In El Paso County, families and employers need an additional 16,935 early childhood, or child care, spots in addition to the 17,452 that exist today. However, creating child care spots is only half the story. When child care is high quality, children's lives are changed for the better. They are more likely to graduate high school and college, earn higher wages, and have better health outcomes. When a community's people do well, the overall economy thrives too.

To meet the child care crisis, It became evident that there was a pressing need to convene community leaders to collaboratively discuss, strategize, and implement solutions to alleviate child care shortages. **Joint Initiatives**, **Pikes Peak United Way**, and the **El Pomar Foundation** took the lead on launching a **Family Friendly City Summit** in May 2024, designed to spark community engagement in the Pikes Peak Region to foster the creation of quality child care spots.

The 100+ Summit delegates represented the sectors of business, education, government, healthcare, human services, media, and faith- and military-based organizations, and were called on to provide experience and expertise from their respective fields with the ultimate goal of co-creating recommended initiatives to address how the community can work together to create critical quality child care programs.

The common themes and shared community priorities which emerged from the Summit are presented in the Family Friendly City Summit Report.



GOAL 4

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



 [READ SUMMIT REPORT HERE](#)

Achieving the goal of adding up to 17,000 new spots will demand heightened civic engagement and dialogue among the public. This effort entails a significant shift in values and attitudes toward early childhood education and child care funding.

THRIVING WORKFORCE

GOAL 5

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



SUPPORTING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

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. Jl engaged 1,060 professionals with various professional development opportunities, including pre-licensing, developmentally appropriate practice, early childhood education leadership, staff retention, and/or positive workplace environments. In addition to the fifty Pre-Licensing participants, eighteen professionals were trained in emergency preparedness and supported in creating disaster plans.



1,060 Trained

**1,060 ENGAGED
IN PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



**BILINGUAL CAREER
NAVIGATOR HIRED**



1,081

**CAREER NAVIGATION HOURS
PROVIDED TO 533 PROFESSIONALS**



**12 SPANISH-SPEAKING
PROFESSIONALS WERE
SUPPORTED**



10

**STUDENTS
EARNED ECE
DEGREES**



CAREER NAVIGATION

The hiring of a bilingual Career Navigator has allowed Jl to increase multi-language workforce support and ensure language justice efforts. A total of 1,081 hours of direct career navigation support was provided to 533 early childhood professionals, including 12 Spanish-speakers. Ten (10) UCCS students who engaged with the Career Navigator successfully graduated in May 2024. Forty (40) professionals received assistance with the Early Childhood Credential 3.0 framework and 22 applications were submitted. Additional support included technical assistance with PDIS, help navigating early childhood programs in El Paso County, referrals for professional development, assistance applying for FAFSA, help enrolling in higher education, and guidance in preparing for interviews and developing resumes. These efforts and successes underscore the need for bilingual support and reinforces our commitment to advancing early childhood education professionals.

THRIVING WORKFORCE



GRANTS TO ADVANCE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Jl received grant funding from **Buell** and the **Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade** to address the early childhood educator shortage. In partnership with Buell, Jl received \$132,703 to support increased outreach to high school and middle school students to attract them into the EC field.

Through the OEDIT grant, Jl received \$622,000 and was able to sustain Career Navigation and create a three-track system for those entering on wanting to continue their education in the early childhood field. This grant enables participants to access free courses in collaboration with **Pikes Peak State College**, while also receiving stipends to overcome barriers that often hinder continued education.



\$622,000

Jl RECEIVED \$622,000 OEDIT GRANT TO LAUNCH ADVANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS PROGRAM

GOAL 5

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



\$132,703

Jl RECEIVED \$132,703 BUELL GRANT TO INCREASE OUTREACH TO MIDDLE + HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

CONCLUSION



The 2023-24 program year achieved notable progress across all five goals.

Key trends include expanded partnerships, enhanced funding opportunities, and increased local engagement, which have collectively advanced our mission to support families, children, and early childhood education professionals in El Paso County.

This program year we've seen a surge in interest in career navigation, deeper engagement with providers resulting in higher Colorado Shines ratings, and successful support of families and providers in our first program year of UPK. We can celebrate an encouraging rise in discussions around the impact of early childhood education in the larger El Paso County community.



KEY TRENDS

EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS

ENHANCED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

INCREASED LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

CONCLUSION



The dedicated Joint Initiatives staff continue to champion the success of children, families, and providers with unwavering commitment.

We're proud of the strong relationships we've forged with families and providers, highlighting our ongoing dedication to supporting our community in a comprehensive and impactful manner.

Overall, while substantial progress was made, ongoing efforts are needed to address funding limitations and systemic barriers to ensure continued success in early childhood education and support for families. Insufficient funds limited our ability to accept new programs and fully support all initiatives, affecting overall capacity. Furthermore, families encountered difficulties in finding affordable, high-quality infant and toddler care, underscoring the urgent need for legislative action and more flexible child care solutions.

In program year 2, JI and the Alliance for Kids Council will focus on legislative advocacy that lends itself to increasing funding for early childhood education, while simultaneously engaging the business community in advocacy efforts. JI will continue to market and promote high quality care to early childhood providers through business consultation, quality coaching, technical assistance and support in efforts to increase community access.

Workforce development, recruitment and retention will also be a focus for JI and the Alliance for Kids Council through innovative partnerships, apprenticeships, and continued engagement with middle school and high school students.

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