

Foundations is the early childhood program of Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families, which includes Alliance for Kids, El Paso County’s Early Childhood Council.

AFK Vision: *The Alliance for Kids is dedicated to making El Paso County the best place to raise a child.*
AFK Mission: *The Alliance for Kids will serve as a vehicle that brings together agencies and individuals to work collaboratively on a seamless system of care for young children and their families in El Paso County.*

UPK & AFK Council Meeting
 MEETING MINUTES
 October 22, 2024 | 1:30–3:30 PM | [Google Drive](#)
[1570 Verde Drive Colorado Springs](#)

Attendees, Liz Denson, Shay Almonte, SherryLynn Boyles, Kandy McDaniel, Angela McKibben, Alma Wiley, Sandy Kwizzel, Wilyn Webb, Althea Jordan, Melissa Gibson-Steiner, Linda Merideth, Toya Graham, Kelly Hurtado, Sophia Horne, Shelley Ettleman, Elizabeth Quevedo, Anthony Adams, Laurie Noblitt, Jennifer Mussaw, Eryn Weems

Welcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liz Denson Started with an icebreaker
Approval of August Minutes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Approved
New Council Member Votes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laurie Noblitt was introduced and voted as the new co-chair. Laurie brings extensive experience in education, having served as a teacher, principal, and district leader. Anthony Adams was elected as a new committee member. His diverse background and public presence are expected to bring a unique perspective to the council's initiative. Elizabeth Quevedo was elected as a new committee member. Elizabeth brings experience in early childhood education and community engagement, which will be valuable to the council's initiatives.

<p>Universal Pre-K (UPK) Program Expansion and Outreach:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 217 providers are now participating, with 13 new providers recently added, creating 73 more slots. • Current capacity includes 4,480 matching providers and 6,264 registered UPK seats, underscoring continued program growth. • Efforts are in place to assist families who haven't matched with providers. • An expanded outreach plan is being developed with partnerships targeting organizations working closely with families. • The state has opened registration for the 2026 school year, allowing providers to set up accounts in advance, enhancing long-term planning.
<p>AFK Strategic Plan Highlights and Discussion:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Navigation: Simplifying access for families to connect with essential resources in early childhood education. • Mental Health Support: Integrating mental health resources to support children and families. Expanding equitable access to high-quality early education slots. • Public Policy and Advocacy: Advocating on supportive policies to increase funding and resources. • Workforce Development: Connecting professionals with opportunities in childcare centers and tracking workforce data.

<p>Summit Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insights from a recent summit stressed public financing, community collaboration, and policy improvements. • Increasing public investment is essential for program quality and sustainability, with engagement from local businesses encouraged to support the childcare needs of employees with young children. • Identified the importance of simplifying navigation and improving resource accessibility for families. • Addressed childcare workforce shortages with a focus on training and incentives. • Proposed a phased approach to integrate summit actions within the strategic plan to keep efforts aligned and adaptable. Feedback will shape updates to the council’s focus on community, policy, and resource allocation.
<p>AFK Committee Structure:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees are being adjusted to align closely with strategic priorities such as public awareness, policy, workforce development, and access to quality programs. • Each committee will have more defined roles and objectives to streamline efforts and ensure accountability, particularly in policy and community engagement areas.
<p>Action Items:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize committee restructuring to align strategic focus areas, with clear directives and accountability for each group. • Update the AFK Strategic Plan for review at the next meeting.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING:
November 19, 2024, 1:30-3:30
Location: Galileo Middle School