



Mesa County

PARTNERSHIP
for Children & Families

ANNUAL REPORT
2022-2023

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INTRODUCTION

Serving as the early childhood Council for Mesa County, the Partnership for Children and Families (PCF) is **charged with responding to local needs** for increased availability and quality, accessibility and affordability of early childhood services. PCF spent its 24th year of existence implementing a community composed strategic plan expanding to support the early childhood education (ECE) industry.

“During the last year, PCF worked to stimulate workforce, increase provider grant access, build quality, and address accessibility issues. With strong partnerships and backing of Mesa County Public Health (MCPH), this has been a year of growth for PCF. We continue to build on a responsive team, generate resources, and are launching the new Universal preschool program bringing around \$8 -10 million dollars to the community.” - Director Stephanie Bivins, MEd

FRAMEWORK

Supporting those that care for children is at the heart of PCF's services. The ECE workforce serves two generations in the community by allowing families to work and children access to early education. The career pipeline supporting recruitment and development expanded opportunities this year and developed a **streamlined application process**. Quality coaching and grant access increased, resulting in added childcare slots and increased quality. In partnership with the MCPH Early Childhood Services (ECS) team and the Business Incubator, services for Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) resulted in **more small businesses** available to provide full day and extended care. Resources were created to support Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN), or unlicensed care. The first year implementation of a childcare search engine, Bridgecare, generated a **real time referral system** for families to find current openings and providers to showcase their programs. Work continues to address the local needs in ECE.

"Mesa County is not alone in lacking childcare options. It is a national issue and PCF has been working with multiple local, state, and even some national partners on ECE efforts, as it has come into light as a pivotal industry not only a foundation to healthy human development, but a backbone industry for economic and business success." - Stephanie Bivins, MEd

INTRODUCING UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

Last year, Colorado passed into law a state funded preschool program called Universal Preschool (UPK). UPK will increase affordability and access to care as a mixed delivery system where **all licensed providers are eligible** to participate providing early childhood education and curriculum.

The program begins in August when the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) expires. **All children the year prior to kindergarten are eligible** for the program with any participating provider and some children two years prior to kindergarten are eligible for school district services. The UPK tuition credit provides **cost savings to families** as well as an income boost for providers. The new law also established Local Coordinating Organizations (LCO) as community partners responsible for supporting access and equitable delivery of the program. Colorado Department of Education (CDEC) partnered with local entities to develop catchment areas across the state and PCF, in partnership with the Mesa County Department of Human Services (MCDHS), was identified by community members to serve as the LCO for Mesa County. PCF serves on multiple committees to develop and support the new program.

"These funds and having our Preschooler in full time care will help us get back on our feet." - Mesa County Parent

ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH

Partnerships are critical to generate positive change and systems to support children and families. PCF has expanded partnerships and avenues to support **diverse methods of advocacy** throughout the year. The Early Childhood Steering Committee continued expansion through the year, adding important community voices to the needs of the community, steering our work. PCF launched its first provider appreciation event in partnership with Wave and Alpine Bank to celebrate licensed childcare providers, distributing almost 500 drink cards to over 50 licensed childcare sites. Our Director became an ECCLA Board member, starting her first term this year. The ECS team and PCF team attended the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference to attend multiple informational sessions from leaders across the state. Our Director shared the local perspective with state legislators about systematic issues in ECE, such as retention, in Washington D.C. and served on a workforce panel in Austin, TX to share our rural strategies.

PCF presentations

- **Colorado Counties Incorporated (CCI)**
- **Whole Child Consultative Conference, Healthy Child Care Colorado**
- **National Association of Counties (NACo) Rural Peer Learning Network**
- **Resilience Catalyst Conference, Center for Community Resilience, George Washington University**
- **NACo Strategic Partnerships to Strengthen the Child Care Workforce**

SUPPORTING CHILDCARE PROFESSIONALS

The PCF career pipeline offers entry-level to advanced degree scholarships in the ECE field, expanding this year to include new opportunities. The **program addresses cost** of professional development, including college scholarships, offering a **variety of formats** for candidate accessibility.

- **200 scholarships awarded this year**
- **Coaching and mentoring support offered resulting in a 73% graduation rate**
- **188 participants entered the field, maintained credentials, and expanded educational growth**

"The CDA program helped open the door to higher education and I quickly realized I wanted to build a career in Early Childhood. I am now enrolled in the Director cohort finishing my director certification. The experience has allowed me to explore more opportunities within Early Childhood." - ECE Teacher

PCF's career pipeline includes multiple Child Development Associate (CDA) programs, one of which serves 13 counties on the western slope. As First aid and CPR are required for certification, these certifications are embedded in the program. PCF hosts Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care (EQIT) courses, which is a state curriculum developed to provide specific training and education on infants and toddlers, including brain development. Our EQIT opportunity expanded to include the **availability of Spanish courses** in partnership with Early Childhood Network. The CDA and EQIT candidates have the opportunity to apply these certifications to college credit and bridge the gap to higher education. Other college course scholarships are also available to assist in maintaining required ongoing professional development.

The career pipeline includes a Director certification cohort in partnership with the Mesa County Workforce Center as a **fast track Director certification**, allowing individuals to advance careers to oversee a childcare program or start their own business. Participants are able to join a cohort with Western Colorado Community College (WCCC) or Colorado Northwestern Community College (CNCC). These participants can also choose the new Early Childhood Teacher certificate. A universal application was developed to streamline the application process.

PCF partners with local community colleges, Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA), and CDEC to promote further opportunities and scholarships throughout the county and state, so individuals can choose what program will best fit their needs.

PCF remains committed to exploring ways to continue efforts to support the industry, as ECE staff are the backbone to quality care and education. Through **increasing access** to a variety of professional development opportunities, ECE staff are able to foster a high standard of care so families have greater access to reliable and high-quality early childhood services.

BUILDING QUALITY AND CAPACITY

PCF implemented new systems of support, partnering with Mesa County Libraries, Colorado University (CU) Denver, CDEC, and Health Child Care Colorado (HCCC).

Early this year, staff launched Project Include with our Mesa County Libraries and CU Denver. Project Include provides training, support, and equipment to assist licensed child care providers in development learning environments that are more **inclusive for all children**, including children with delays and disabilities. Serving as a Pre-licensing training vendor with CDEC, PCF assisted in **17 new FCCH providers** with their small businesses. PCF is also now offering the Pyramid Plus Approach training from HCCC free of charge to increase social emotional professional development opportunities.

Mesa County has 97 licensed providers serving children throughout the year with a total capacity of 2,684. Mesa County's 0-4 child population is around 7,914.

To address the need for care for families, PCF, in partnership with the ECS team and CDEC, assisted with an increased access of 145 Universal Preschool slots with the school district, 32 additional slots from opening 4 new FCCHs businesses, with a **total of 280 new slots** in Mesa County.

Providers accessing council grants with PCF increased

- **69% of eligible provider participation**
- **\$903,010.63 in funds released improve spaces, increase slots, or begin a childcare business**
- **1,815 children benefit from enhanced learning environments**
- **485 children experience an increased quality of care**

Of these participating program, **49 serve families needing assistance** with cost of care. Mesa County currently has 40 Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) providers offering high quality care.

*"Programs like Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families are crucial for Childcare providers. From coaching to funding, they ensure that we are able to implement quality standards in our programs."
- Mesa County Family Child Care Home Provider*

LAUNCHING UPK

In preparations to launch Universal Preschool, PCF worked with MCPH, Mesa County Public Libraries, all local school districts, Grand Valley Connects, and the CCCAP Program to host events in the community, including a media campaign, radio interviews, local news channel presence, and even joining library story times to meet families. The collaboration fueled awareness within our community to **promote equitable access** to mixed delivery funding options. Universal Preschool will provide between 7.5 Million to 9.4 Million in tuition credits for 4 year old care in Mesa County, with over 4 Million to local small business owners.

- **63/97 eligible providers are participating**
- **1,410 Universal Preschool slots (to serve the area's 1,653 four year olds)**
- **1,352 applications**
- **900 have been matched to a school of choice**

INCREASING FAMILY ACCESS

In our efforts to create meaningful connections with our community, staff worked to expand outreach efforts resulting in over 5,000 users on social media platforms and around 1,300 views within 5 months of the navigational websites created for Universal Preschool. The childcare data platform, Bridgecare, launched last year, has become Mesa County's **childcare directory** with over 1,100 community searches and 155 family accounts. A total of **61% of all licensed childcare providers are providing accurate information** to their community in real time.

PCF has not only refined services, we have refined our brand for better recognition, and are in the process of revamping the website to increase user ability and functionality to continue to improve our ability to **serve as an ECE resource hub**.

CONCLUSION

Understanding that ECE is a unique industry as the **backbone to other industries, allowing families to join the workforce and support the local economy**, Mesa County has several unique projects, such as Community Hospital's new Adventure Academy, the City's Child Care program, and the new Clifton Community Campus. This is an exciting time in ECE as leaders across the county are generating creative ways to address the needs of families. PCF has been honored throughout the year to support efforts, whether it's joining a grand opening, groundbreaking ceremonies, serving on the design team for the Clifton campus, or assistance in navigating the ECE landscape. **Mesa County is truly unique in its approach to work in a multifaceted, community collaborative with families at the heart.**

Our council has been more active than ever serving on boards, panels, advocacy teams, work groups, and committees standing up brand new programs like Universal Preschool. Our council built and maintained local systems of support for the ECE industry, working to remove barriers to increase FCCHs, expand the career pipeline, increase coaching and grant access, and generate new methods to impact the community. Linked to many community partners, the team has refined supportive roles in services throughout the year to **propel the strategic plan** with sites on future impact.



BY THE NUMBERS

18% increase in ECE Steering Committee membership

200 scholarships issued

280 new licensed child care slots

69% provider engagement

1,410 Universal Preschool slots

485 children experience increased quality of care

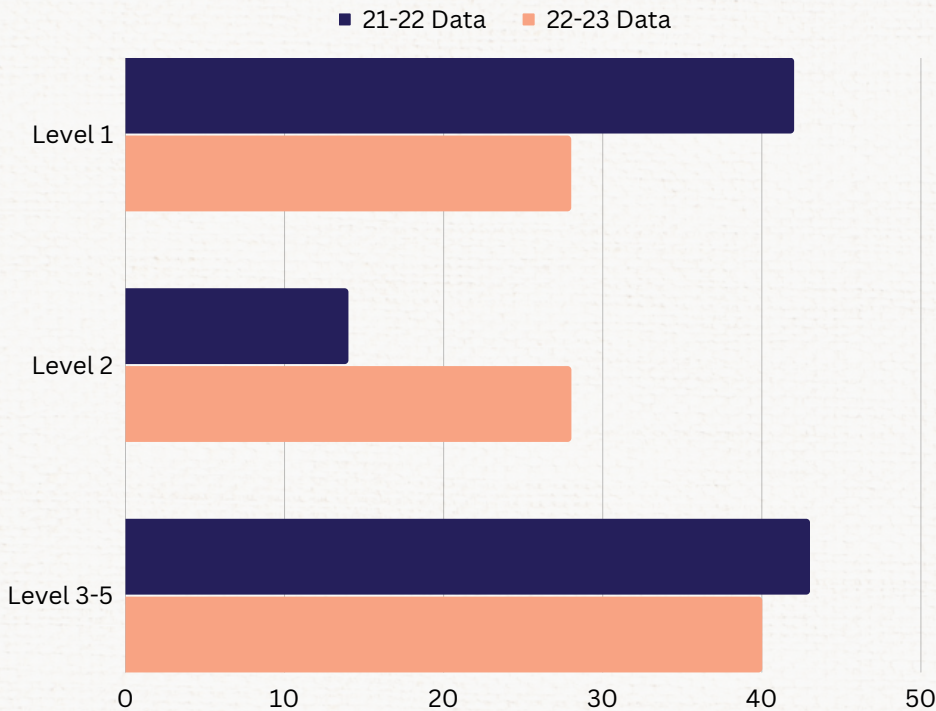
1,815 children benefit from quality gains

\$903,010 quality improvement dollars released

QUALITY RATINGS

COLORADO SHINES RATING

A COLORADO SHINES RATING IS A SYMBOL OF QUALITY IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS.



Total: 97 licensed providers
Licensed Capacity: 2,684 children



MISSION

CREATE, COORDINATE, AND SUSTAIN A RESOURCE-RICH, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SO THAT CHILDREN CAN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL IN SAFE AND OPTIMALLY NURTURING ENVIRONMENTS.

VISION

HELPING FAMILIES REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

2022-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

SCAN CODE FOR
FULL PLAN





THANK YOU!

mesacountypcf.org

