



**Program Quality, Alignment & Access
Subcommittee
May 9, 2025 ~ 9:00-11:00 am
MINUTES**

Meeting Objectives:

- Learn about the Local Organizational Capacity grant project supporting families with infants and toddlers.
 - Learn about the findings from the community conversations about the Statewide Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. Consider how these findings can inform PQAA efforts.
 - Learn about the priorities of families and providers. Consider how we can further elevate family and provider voice.
 - Generate a list of potential families or providers who may want to share at future PQAA meetings.
 - Fill in any gaps in the information on the [List of Early Childhood Plans](#).
 - Learn about the results of the Early Milestones Oral Health Project, and share this information with your networks.
 - Advance the [PQAA Priorities](#) and the goals of the [ECLC Strategic Plan](#)
-

Attendance: Amy Downs, Angie Shehorn, Chris Miller, Chrissy Nichols, Dawn Alexander, Elizabeth Greene, Heather Craighow, Heidi White, Kacee Miller, Kristen Lang, Kristina Heyl, Leah Caputo, Ligita Cunningham, Lisa Jansen Thompson, Lisa Schlueter, Lucia DiPrima, Marika Padilla, Mary Houlihan, Meghan More, Pamela Harris, Robyn Bertoni, Samantha O'Neill Dunbar, Teri Pinney, Theresa Rapstine, Princess Mack, Taran Schneider

Welcome, Introductions & Approve Minutes

Kacee Miller called the meeting to order at 9:02 am and reviewed the meeting objectives. She asked attendees to introduce themselves. Next, she asked for a motion to approve the March 2025 meeting minutes. Pamela Harris moved to approve the minutes as drafted, Elizabeth Greene seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Local Organizational Capacity Project Supporting Families with Infants and Toddlers Report

Marika Padilla, Colorado Department of Early Childhood, shared information about Local Organization Capacity grants that were funded through the Preschool Development Grant. The project started in 2023 with a survey to local organizations asking about the greatest needs in their communities. The survey overwhelmingly showed that local organizations wanted support for strengthening families and providers working within the context of infant and toddler supports. The group then opened a mini-grant application for local organizations who would form a team to address concerns around infant and toddler care. They then held Regional Convenings for awardees where teams had dedicated time and technical assistance to plan and take action in their communities. 14 teams were awarded grants from throughout the state and each team included people from a variety of local organizations.

Meghan More, Colorado Department of Early Childhood, shared the deliverables that teams created through this work. Deliverables include needs assessments, a conference and resource fair, resources to share information with families, and trainings. After the work was complete, they created videos to share the work done in each region. Meghan shared [a video](#) sharing the overall process, and the regional videos were linked in the slide deck. She then shared lessons learned from the process and plans for next steps.

Subcommittee members shared excitement about this work and appreciated that even small amounts of funding can go a long way in local communities. They also asked how CDEC will continue to focus on infants and toddlers. Meghan, Marika and Kristen Lang shared examples of projects in various CDEC divisions

addressing the issues. Heather Craiglow also shared examples related to tying child care into housing policy and the work of the Head Start Alliance.

Statewide Early Childhood Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan Community Conversations Findings

Kristen Lang, Colorado Department of Early Childhood, shared that CDEC staff traveled to local communities to share the results of the Statewide Needs Assessment and Statewide Strategic Plan that were created through the Preschool Development Grant. The purpose of the travel was to hold community discussion and support the dissemination of the Assessment and Strategic Plan and for communities to identify the top needs and root causes of those needs in their communities and to identify strategies that could address those root causes. Another purpose was for CDEC to visit and learn from local communities. CDEC staff traveled to 13 locations serving 23 counties, reaching a total of 517 participants. Participants included early childhood councils, public health representatives, human services representatives, service providers, members of the workforce, and families.

She then shared the top identified needs, root causes, and objectives from the strategic plan that were identified in communities across the state. She also shared the local innovations that communities were already working on to address needs, insights that CDEC staff gained from the trips, and comments from community members who participated in the meetings.

Subcommittee members asked about why the costs of child care are so high in Colorado. Other members shared factors leading to this including workforce needs, the cost of quality care, licensing requirements, and a lack of public funding.

Subcommittee members also expressed a need to take bold action to address infant and toddler care and to keep the conversation going at PQAA and ECLC meetings. One idea for how the Subcommittee can do this is to consider how to improve messaging to show the need.

Speak Up for Kids Day Report and Family and Provider Voice

Leah Caputo, Colorado Children's Campaign, shared information about the recent Speak Up for Kids Day. The purpose of Speak Up for Kids Day is to bring together community policy makers, advocates, and leaders to work together to make lasting change for kids and families. The event empowers individuals to become advocates for childhood policies by training and supporting them to have conversations with lawmakers. The focus areas for advocacy included modernizing the Tony Grampas program, sustaining and expanding Universal Preschool, protecting child care subsidies, and funding for early intervention services. Over 200 people attended the event from across the state with about half of those people focused on early childhood issues.

Leah also shared that Colorado Children's Campaign staff traveled to local communities this spring to learn about the needs of local communities, which will inform their upcoming priorities. Need they heard about included access to child care and early learning, specifically for infants and toddlers, and an need for more hours for the Universal Preschool Program.

She shared information about the Kids Flash Newsletter, the upcoming Kids County Release, and the upcoming 40 year anniversary party for the Children's Campaign.

Family and Provider Voice

Robyn Bertoni, a parent and early childhood teacher at Mile High Early Learning, shared her experience with the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program. She shared that using the program to access care for her first child supported her to overcome homelessness, obtain a GED, and led her to become an early childhood teacher. She is now struggling to access care for her twins due to CCCAP freezes. She encouraged advocacy for more funding for CCCAP to help families.

Early Milestones Oral Health Project Report

Amy Downs, Results Consulting in partnership with Early Milestones Colorado, shared a report titled Child Care Health Consultants: Supporting Oral Health in Child Care Settings. She shared the importance of supporting oral health in early childhood, including preventing future oral health problems and supporting success at schools. Having voluntary screenings in early childhood can support better oral health outcomes and reduce disparities. This report explores how Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) can provide this kind of care. Child care programs in Colorado are required to consult with CCHCs once a month for support in developing health policies and to provide health related programs. She shared the questions that the report addresses and current funding challenges related to CCHCs. The report provides information about potential funding sources to fund CCHCs and policies that could better support these positions. Key takeaways include:

- Colorado has the most rigorous requirements for engaging with CCHCs but is the only state without public financing to support.
- Funding sources from other states are already fully extended in Colorado, but there are potential opportunities to use Medicaid funding or to seek voter approved funding.
- Finding from this report could extend to other health services provided in child care settings.

She also shared information about how other states structure and fund their CCHC programs. Possible supports for CCHC include creatively using Medicaid funds, using Community Health Workers to support these goals, coordinating with Colorado's School Health Services Programs, and local funding.

PQAA Priorities

Co-Chair Lisa Schlueter asked Subcommittee members to [sign up](#) to organize and support a speaker with lived experience to speak at a future PQAA meeting.

Member Updates and Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next Steps, Final Thoughts and Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:58 am.

Note: Any presentation requested by the ECLC does not constitute or imply an endorsement of the product, process, service, or organization by the ECLC.

ECLC Program Quality, Alignment & Access Subcommittee Charge:

The Program Quality, Alignment, and Access Subcommittee (PQAA) of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission is charged with identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, the alignment of standards, rules, policies, and procedures across programs and agencies that support young children and to enhance the quality of and access to services and supports for young children.