

# Welcome

***We invite you to view the 2019-20 Annual Report for Alliance for Kids (AFK), the Early Childhood Council of El Paso County and Initiative of Joint Initiatives for Youth and Families.*** The report outlines the successes in meeting AFK's Strategic Plan for 2019-20, 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).

## A YEAR OF SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

***The Council's work for the fiscal year of July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020, was defined by both the work in meeting goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan, as well as detours brought about by both community and world-wide events.*** In November, the community of El Paso County was struck with several emergency child care closings, which prompted AFK to shift its attention from the Strategic Plan to its role as the child care resource and referral agency. The AFK team members gathered together to develop a plan to meet the community needs at the time. AFK provided additional needed services and supports for families and the community as they worked their way through this community predicament. For the first time, AFK provided in person supports for families to navigate resources and find child care. AFK learned many "lessons" through this crisis, which allowed its team to be better equipped to provide emergency supports when needed...then COVID-19 hit in mid-March. AFK team members gathered together once again and prepared and outlined steps to once again meet community, family, and professional needs through this crisis. Many "lessons learned" were gained this year. Overall, AFK had a successful year in meeting both Strategic Plan goals and emergency community needs.

***Alliance for Kids has provided the complete Annual Report Narrative beginning on Page 9.***

# LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

**Objective 1:** AFK will increase the number and percentage of licensed Early Care and Education (ECE) centers and Family Child Care Homes (FCCHs) that offer high quality services.

**Objective 2:** AFK will increase the number of highly qualified ECE professionals in El Paso County (EPC) by providing supports and services to existing and potential ECE professionals.

**Objective 3:** AFK increases availability of, and access to, high quality licensed ECE services for infants and toddlers in EPC.

**Objective 4:** AFK will increase community awareness of, and engagement with, Family, Friends, and Neighbors (FFN) caregivers.

## GOAL 1

The Alliance for Kids will increase access to high quality Early Care and Education services and resources that promote children's healthy development and school readiness.

### INCREASING HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE & EDUCATION SERVICES

**3** ECE programs increased their rating to high quality

**33** Programs maintained their high-quality rating

**15** Level 2 programs are working on submitting for a Level 3-5 rating

### COVID-19 IMPACT

Due to COVID-19 the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) was suspended in mid-March through fiscal year June 30, 2020. Fifteen ECE programs are anticipating a rating in 2020-21. Five programs are awaiting licensure.

**11**

NEW

LEVEL 2

PROGRAMS

**48**

Programs holding a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate quality improvement goals, and receive coaching and additional resources to maintain or improve to a high-quality rating.

AFK OUTREACHED TO ALL 171 MOU ELIGIBLE SITES FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTREACH FOR ALL 260 LEVEL 1 PROGRAMS

### COVID-19 IMPACT

Unfortunately, we saw a decrease of 22 licensed child care centers in the past year. COVID-19 impacted decisions to close some programs, or let licenses go and function as exempt providers. Additionally, some FCCH programs closed due to retirement of the provider.

On a positive note, even though it has been predicted that Colorado would lose up to 55% of its child care supply state-wide due to COVID-19, this does not seem to be the case in El Paso County. A supply/demand analysis conducted by AFK in May-June determined thus far only a 9% (40 ECE programs) loss in licensed child care at a high and as low as 4%. Future efforts will continue to focus on sustaining, reopening and rebuilding programs to allow our community to get back to work and provide high quality services to children and families, with a community program launched by AFK in partnership with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, "Sustain, Rebuild, and Reinvent Child Care in El Paso County."



## 123

New professionals credentialed in PDIS  
*Exceeds Annual Goal of 75!*

## 131

Currently credentialed professionals increase their level  
*Exceeds Annual Goal of 50!*

## 317

Technical assistance sessions related to QRIS, PDIS, and CCCAP  
*Exceeds Annual Goal of 125!*

## 25

Trainings

## 285

Participants

## 19

Professionals were supported with their Child Development Associate (CDA)

## 7

Leadership opportunities to strengthen administrative practices



## ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES

- AFK provided scholarship and Early Childhood Teacher information at a CDA Orientation through the School District 11 Adult Learning Center.
- Through AFK's partnerships with the the Pikes Peak Community College Workforce Center and the Pikes Peak Workforce Center Career Boost, recruitment planning for the upcoming CDA and Apprenticeship program took place.

## COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

*Three local partners have been developed into community champions for early childhood education* this year, including Fountain Valley Communities that Care, El Paso County Department of Human Services and El Paso County Public Health.



## COVID-19 IMPACT

- Ensuring professional development opportunities to allow for Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) qualification has become increasingly important in the face of COVID-19 Public Health Order requirements for early childhood programs. Many programs report having to have twice the number of ECT qualified staff to meet requirements. Future efforts will focus on upskilling current teacher assistants with funding available through the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, engaging professionals in the Child Care Specialist Apprenticeship (which allows for ECT qualification), and providing funding and technical assistance for professional development costs associated with programs qualifying professionals.
- Due to COVID-19, strategies are being developed to offer virtual meetings and information sharing opportunities to help increase the credentials of the ECE Workforce.

## GOAL 1

The Alliance for Kids will increase access to high quality Early Care and Education services and resources that promote children's healthy development and school readiness.

**46** Additional I/T slots due to CSQI and Hardship Grants (see right)

**48** Programs will make efforts to offer I/T slots to CCCAP children

**45** MOUs with high quality programs serving CCCAP I/T to maintain or increase quality

## COVID-19 IMPACT

One of the quality sites that entered into a MOU expanded their program to have 46 additional infant and toddler slots. Their expected opening date for March 2020, was not possible due to the impact of COVID-19 and suspension of new licensing inspections.



## FAMILY, FRIEND, & NEIGHBOR (FFN) CAREGIVERS

**12** FFN caregivers engaged through outreach

**17** Community partners educated about FFNs and provided with resources to share with FFNs through their work.



## ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES

The Fostering Resilience in Early Education (FREE) project was funded through the Colorado Health Foundation. This will allow targeted supports to be provided directly to FFNs to help them increase their own well-being and thus increase the opportunity for them to provide the best care possible for the children. This partnership with Rocky Mountain Preventive Research Center began late this fiscal year and is a two-year project.



## SUPPLY DRIVE TO SUPPORT CHILD CARE PROGRAMS!

**Through community partnerships, the support of local and state agencies, and the support of individuals in our community, Alliance for Kids has been able to provide FREE supplies to early care and education programs and family child care homes. These include:**

- Colorado Department of Human Services
- Colorado Office of Early Childhood
- Pikes Peak United Way
- Catholic Charities of Central Colorado
- Early Connections Learning Centers
- CPCD giving children a head start
- Target
- Local Mask Makers
- Community Donors

## GOAL 1

The Alliance for Kids will increase access to high quality Early Care and Education services and resources that promote children's healthy development and school readiness.

# HEALTH & WELL-BEING

**Objective 1:** The Alliance for Kids (AFK) will sustain and increase available activities and projects that support healthy social/emotional development of young children and the inclusion of children with special needs.

**Objective 2:** AFK will increase the number of ECE professionals and community partners who access existing Council resources and sustain skills learned to more effectively support children's social/emotional development and children with special needs.

## GOAL 2

The Alliance for Kids will expand the capacity of Early Care and Education professionals and community partners to effectively support the social/emotional development of young children, including those with special needs.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION

A total of 5696 hours of direct Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultation were provided in El Paso, Teller, and Park Counties combined.



ECMH intake process successfully transferred from TRE to AFK on July 1, 2020. This project has expanded to incorporate resource navigators who are making referrals to additional partners which provide health and behavioral health supports to ECE providers and families. Partners include: Colorado Community Health Alliance (EPC Regional Accountability Entity), AspenPointe (EPC Mental Health Provider), HCP (program for children and youth with special health care needs), and Peak Vista (federally qualified health centers for the Pikes Peak region).

### Children Impacted by Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

**33 CHILDREN AT RISK**

Of Expulsion at Enrollment in ECMH Consultation



**24 CHILDREN (70%)  
NO LONGER AT RISK**



### Pyramid Plus Approach Training

**53**

Number of participants completing the training exceeded the goal.

**94%**

Participants responded they could immediately implement a moderate (42%) or extensive amount (52%) of PPA skills into the classroom.

## Participants in "Foundations to Thrive," a 1.5-year Pilot Project implementing Seven of the Ten Best Practices of the ECMH Toolkit, responded:

Strategies (e.g., daily schedule, routines, positive language) learned through the program helped to **reduce challenging behaviors** in the classroom.

Gaining a foundational understanding of behavior helped some to develop **more patience in the classroom.**

All teachers who responded expressed that the program **helped them on a personal level.**

One teacher stated that she didn't understand the true value of the project until one day when she realized that she was **no longer stressed** and thinking about work at the end of the day.



## ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES

### Foundations to Thrive (FTT) Project

- The FTT Project and implementation of the ECMH Toolkit included supports for teachers to build increased partnerships with families and a Positive Solutions for Families session
- Learnings from project implementation will drive the development of a cost-effective model. Center Readiness Model and program components have been developed, which are precursors for selection of future sites.
- Director and Assistant Director now have Pyramid Plus Approach (PPA) Coaching Certification. Multiple teachers were trained in PPA during the January and March 2019 classes.

### Overall Successes

- The winter PPA class was successfully transitioned to an online version, and will be offered until the safer-at-home order lifts. This opportunity has allowed AFK to formally launch in-person professional development offerings on a virtual platform.
- AFK partnered with Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center on two successful grant applications to implement the evidence-based FREE (Fostering Resilience in Early Education) curriculum. This two-generation, center-based intervention will focus on ensuring that early care and education (ECE) providers have access to workplace supports that improve their well-being, in turn promoting high-quality relationships with the children in their care and fostering resilience.
- Ten ECE programs in El Paso and Teller Counties will be impacted through the Colorado Springs Health Foundation Grant, and ten Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers through The Colorado Health Foundation grant. Project planning began in May 2020 for these two-year grants.

## COVID-19 IMPACT

NO fidelity of implementation data for PPA was able to be gathered due to COVID-19. It is desired to pursue Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) scores in the coming fiscal year. The remaining PPA sessions for winter were successfully transitioned to an online version.

## GOAL 2

The Alliance for Kids will expand the capacity of Early Care and Education professionals and community partners to effectively support the social/emotional development of young children, including those with special needs.

# FAMILY SUPPORT & EDUCATION

## GOAL 3

The Alliance for Kids will increase family knowledge of and access to high quality comprehensive services and resources to promote healthy child development.

**Objective 1:** Alliance for Kids will sustain and promote the FamilySPEAK project to connect and empower families to access resources and services to promote healthy child development.

**Objective 2:** Work with community organizations to support a comprehensive system of high quality family services and resources to promote healthy child development.

**Objective 3:** Work with community organizations to promote the well-being and resiliency of parents and caregivers to increase family knowledge and capacity to promote healthy child development.

**Objective 4:** Build professionals' knowledge and ability to engage parents and caregivers to support children's healthy development.

# FamilySPEAK

Family Support | Parent Education | Knowledge

## SUSTAIN & PROMOTE FAMILYSPEAK CONNECT & EMPOWER FAMILIES

Funding to sustain the FamilySPEAK project was secured through Council and Temple Hoyne Buell funds (2019-20) and Council systems-building funds (2020-21) through the Colorado Department of Human Services when AFK reached its maximum funding allocation of \$150,000.

For July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020, engagement with social media posts and increased user totals for the FamilySPEAK website demonstrated a community responsiveness to the content shared and provided. This was seen on both a continual basis, and in response to specific events in our community (e.g., ECE program emergency closures and the COVID-19 pandemic).

Five new community partnerships were formed with agencies joining the FamilySPEAK committee along with the Community & Family Education Supervisor participating and/or becoming a member of a community agency's advisory committee. All FamilySPEAK community partnership MOUs were maintained. The FamilySPEAK committee continued to meet virtually through COVID-19.

# 2,544

 FamilySPEAK.org Website Users

**92% of our website users are new**  
**8% of our website users are returning**

# 83

 @FamilySPEAK Facebook Posts

**Post with MOST engagement:**

In light of the child care situation now impacting our community, Alliance for Kids, the Early Childhood Council for El Paso County, will be offering enhanced supports for families aligned with our role as the Child Care Resource & Referral agency for EPC. If your family has been affected by the recent closings and needs resources or support, please visit [Allianceforkids.org](http://Allianceforkids.org) or [FamilySPEAK.org](http://FamilySPEAK.org).



illuminate  
Building Brighter Childhoods



**BUDGET WITH DAVE**

**CENTER ON FATHERING**

# PARENT WELL-BEING & RESILIENCY INCREASE KNOWLEDGE & CAPACITY

## GOAL 3

The Alliance for Kids will increase family knowledge of and access to high quality comprehensive services and resources to promote healthy child development.

**5** Positive Solutions for Families Classes facilitated by The Resource Exchange

**138** PSFF Class Participants

**1** Equity Forum

**86** Families supported with community referrals

**16** Families attended Road to Financial Freedom class

**55** Calls supporting families needing Emergency Child Care (April-May)



Colorado Chapter  
**CIRCLE of PARENTS**<sup>®</sup>

**AFK partnered with Communities that Care in Fountain-Valley to bring 'Circle of Parents' to the community.**

Circle of Parents<sup>®</sup> provides a friendly, supportive environment led by parents and other caregivers, where parents are the experts. It's a place where anyone in a parenting role can openly discuss the successes and challenges of raising children. It's a place where they can find and share support.



## ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES

AFK team attended WIC from July until mid-March to present and/or share child development and other family resources. AFK engaged in over 15 community events up to mid-March to present and/or share information with families, community and/or community agencies regarding the importance of quality child care and the early years, including the Early Learning & Development Guidelines and The Buzz newsletter for families (also available on FamilySPEAK.org website). Events included: AFK Community Network meeting, VillaSport School Expo, three kindergarten readiness events in collaboration with the Pikes Peak Library District, and a Calhan school district event.

## COVID-19 IMPACT

Due to COVID-19, continued efforts to expand the Two-Generation Project (2GO) were put on hold.

FamilySPEAK and outreach events turned virtual. the Family Education Supervisor participated in Illuminate Colorado's Circle of Families, Keeping Families Strong through COVID-19, and Communities that Care events. In addition, we received increased calls on parent/family phone line for child care and other needed resources to help parents and families maneuver through the pandemic.

The Community & Family Education Supervisor position received additional Colorado Department of Human Services - Office of Early Childhood funding (CARES Act funds) to support families in need of emergency child care in support of the Colorado Emergency Child Care Collaborative project to match the essential workers with child care.