

**PROMISES FOR CHILDREN
WELD COUNTY'S EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
ANNUAL EVALUATION
JULY 1, 2019 - JUNE 30, 2020**

Executive Summary

Promises for Children (PFC), Weld County's Early Childhood Council, works to create an environment where all children are valued, healthy, and thriving. PFC is a community partnership dedicated to improving the wellbeing of all children in Weld County by focusing on the critical growth and brain development period from pre-birth to eight years of age to promote school readiness and lifelong success.

Promises for Children is a Weld County community collaborative that was formed in 2000 and is led by United Way of Weld County (UWWC). The concept of PFC originated after the Colorado Children's Campaign presented their annual "Kids Count" report to community members in Weld County; their findings demonstrated continuing decline in the wellbeing of Weld County's children and the urgent need for action. At the same time, United Ways all over the world were changing their model from raising and distributing funds to bringing local communities together to tackle their greatest challenges. United Way of Weld County leaders recognized this opportunity to coordinate a focused collaborative effort to make real changes for young children, and Promises for Children was born.

In 2007, Colorado House Bill 1062 authorized the creation of the Colorado Early Childhood Councils. The intent of the Councils as stated in the legislation was to "improve and sustain the availability, accessibility, capacity, and quality of early childhood services for children and families throughout the state." According to the legislation, these Councils were established "for the purpose of developing and ultimately implementing a comprehensive system of early childhood services to ensure the school readiness of children five years of age or younger in the community." Weld County's commissioners, having witnessed the work PFC had accomplished over the past seven years, endorsed it to serve as Weld County's Early Childhood Council.

Of the 1.2 million children living in Colorado, 82,348 call Weld County home (as of 2018). Weld County lies within the relatively flat northeastern portion of Colorado; with a total area of 4,017 square miles, it is the third-largest county in Colorado by area and is larger than Rhode Island, Delaware, and the District of Columbia combined. Among the 64 counties in Colorado, Weld County ranks ninth in total population; a little over a third of the population lives in Greeley, the county seat. Weld County's child population has the second fastest rate of growth in the state, a situation that presents both opportunities and challenges.

Poverty is one of the most important factors affecting a child's life. 13% of children under 18 in Weld County live in poverty, and 45% of school aged youth qualify for free or reduced lunch. In Eastern Greeley and Evans (Greeley is the county seat), the percent of children under 18 in poverty jumps to 28% – or nearly one in three children. 43% of families who live in East Greeley with children under age five had income below the poverty line in 2017 – that's almost one out of every two families with children in the most critical period of development. Much of the county's poverty is related to a rapidly growing population, an ever-increasing cost of housing, and a job base that often does not pay a living wage.

Other influences (some of which are related to income) on a child's life: 23% of births in Weld County are to single women, and 14% are to women without a high school diploma/GED. About one in five pregnant women do not receive early prenatal care, and the child abuse and neglect rate is 11.2 per 1,000. 7% of women smoked during pregnancy, and 21% of Weld County children are overweight or obese.

Race and ethnicity play an important role in a child's future as well. Weld County's graduation rate is 86% for all students, but it drops to just 77% when looking solely at Hispanic students (29% of Weld County residents identify as Hispanic, a number that is increasing). Greeley is home to refugees from a multitude of countries as many families move from the nearby resettlement city of Denver to Greeley for job opportunities. In 2019, 16% of Weld County students were English language learners, and one in five families with a five year old child spoke another language at home, either in addition to, or instead of, English.

A lack of available child care slots is one of the most pressing challenges Weld County's families are facing. In 2018, there were about 15,000 children under 6 with all available parents in the workforce, yet there were only about 6,200 licensed child care slots in child care centers, homes and preschools – creating a critical child care desert. When there isn't child care available, parents are forced to leave the workforce or children don't receive adequate care. Data from the 2016 Weld County Community Health Survey conducted by the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment shows that 11% of households with children have had to quit, not take, or change jobs due to child care problems. Among parents age 18-34, that increases to 17%. Additionally, the cost of child care in Colorado is the third highest in the nation – infant care accounts for 20% of a median family income, while that percentage becomes 50% of a single mother's median income. 5% of Weld County residents reported needing but not obtaining child care financial assistance, likely due to it not being available. Those with less than a high school diploma, those at the lowest income levels, and those who identify as Hispanic were the populations in greatest need (all around 8%).

Many of the above circumstances influence a child's success in school and consequently in life. For the 2019 Colorado standardized tests, just 39% of fourth grade students met or exceeded expectations in English Language Arts – a whopping 61% are not reading and writing at the expected level by fourth grade. Equally dismal, just 27% of 2019 students met or exceeded math

expectations. To ensure our communities have the leaders and professionals who will better our future, Weld County will need to rally together to help our children thrive today.

Methodology

PFC, Weld County's Early Childhood Council, is one of many councils statewide that coordinate early childhood service delivery. We work to improve the system and the coordination of services for children in Weld County using the Colorado Early Childhood Framework to guide our work. This framework focuses on three domains: family support and education, health and wellbeing, and early learning. PFC has added a fourth domain as well, communication and advocacy. PFC takes a holistic approach to a child by supporting all four domains – some directly and others by working with community partners. Our work is guided by community needs assessments and is data-driven.

Descriptions of Goals

Long-term indicators of success include:

- Local resources for health, development, mental health, education, and family support are easily accessible for Weld County families.
- Weld County community partners actively participate to form a safety net of services that ensures all children and their families receive the help they need.
- Early childhood professionals receive training opportunities in best practices to increase their knowledge, skills, and the quality of care provided.
- Weld County children enter school ready to learn and continue to succeed as they progress, as demonstrated by the critical milestones of reading proficiently by fourth grade and graduating on time.

As we work toward these long-range goals, short-term goals for the 2019-2020 year included:

- Family Support & Education: Increase coordination of resources to provide access to information about young children's overall wellness and development for parents.
- Health & Wellbeing: Work with community partners to increase awareness of nutrition, physical activity, and mental health services available in the county.
- Community Awareness & Advocacy: Link public engagement/awareness efforts about early childhood issues, priorities, and challenges, and share/implement with stakeholders.
- Early Learning & Development: Outreach to informal and formal care environments to promote school readiness for all.
- Systems Building: Build a seamless system between parents, families, child care providers, and service providers to deliver early childhood services in the areas of early care and education, family support, mental health, and health.
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program:
 - Increase the percentage of child care programs with access to slots for CCCAP subsidies.
 - Increase Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System engagement (level 2 or higher).

- Increase the number and percentage of CCCAP eligible children being served in a high quality program (levels 3-5).
- Promote the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System and the Early Learning and Development Guidelines at least once a month.

Statement of Progress

- **Family Support & Education:** Increase coordination of resources to provide access to information about young children’s overall wellness and development for parents.
 - Pre-COVID, 320 caregivers were given support on a wide spectrum of skills necessary for raising a well-developed child through our Bright by Three program.
 - During COVID, 696 contact-less home deliveries were made to families of essential items including diapers, wipes, formula, hygiene products, and children’s books. These deliveries add up to about 16,700 diapers, 700 packages of baby wipes, 2,500 ounces of baby formula, and over 2,600 miles driven.
 - FEMA shipments of essential items were coordinated and redistributed out to local agencies and families. These items included over 55,600 diapers, 28,200 ounces formula, and 1,400 packages of wipes totaling over \$71,700 worth of product.
 - Over 8,500 calls to 2-1-1, which is a call center and online resource to connect families to multiple resources including child care resource, housing, food, utility assistance and more. 538 of those calls were for child care.
 - The annual Northern Colorado Children’s Festival usually held in April at the Island Grove Event Center was cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 Northern Colorado Children’s Festival is scheduled for April 10th. Though we were unable to host the Northern Colorado Children’s Festival this year, we did get to participate in many drive-through events with different partner agencies around the county. These events gave families the opportunity to connect to different local resources during a difficult time.
 - 25 (30% decrease) families received support through their employer offsetting the cost of child care. This affected 38 children in child care.
 - PFC sponsored three businesses so they could take the Family Friendly Workplace assessment from Healthlinks.

- **Health & Wellbeing:** Work with community partners to increase awareness of nutrition, physical activity, and mental health services available in the county.
 - Support community partners to provide services and connections for the well-being of the whole child. Over 40 community partners, child care providers, parents, and businesses sit on the early childhood council and various committees to ensure alignment, address gaps in service, and keep each other informed.

- **Community Awareness & Advocacy:** Link public engagement/awareness efforts about early childhood issues, priorities, and challenges, and share/implement with stakeholders.

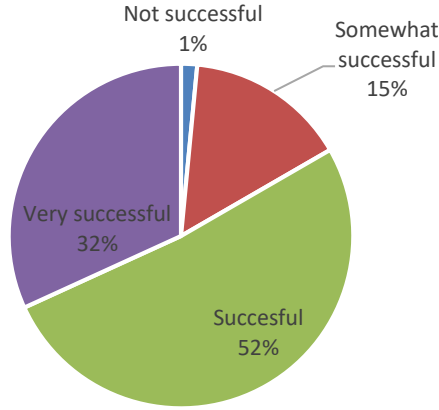
- The Roadmap4Kids, created in April 2018, had 2,494 website hits this year. 10,473 promotional materials for the Roadmap were distributed to 125 partners and their clients.
 - Over 5,000 School Readiness Calendars were given to parents of three and four year olds to help them be prepared for kindergarten.
 - Monthly newsletter reached over 500 early childhood providers and advocates.
 - PFC engaged with the Early Childhood Collective Impact fund process, which is a community strategic planning and funding process led by United Way of Weld County.
- Early Learning & Development - Outreach to informal and formal care environments to promote school readiness for all.
 - Colorado Reading Corps served 263 children at 13 Greeley/Evans School District elementary schools; 67% of students were above target growth.
 - COVID-19 created many challenges for child care providers. Some of those challenges included finding cleaning supplies, masks, and other resources to keep their doors open. PFC provided care packages to support providers basic needs during this crisis. The Colorado Office of Early Childhood provided additional cleaning supplies (636 gallons of hand soap, 1590 rolls of paper towels, 2544 rolls of toilet paper, 106 gallons of bleach, and 2650 boxes of 100 count gloves) and over 2,800 masks to be distributed to providers through the councils. 500 children masks were purchased and distributed to child care providers.
 - Partnership with Weld Child Care to increase child care capacity and quality serving our most vulnerable children in Weld County resulted in awareness at 60 events, 277 leads to support individuals navigating the early childhood varied pathways, and 127 providers/community members attending the annual speaker training regarding challenging behaviors. When COVID began, it forced us to get even more creative with recruitment and outreach. Organizations began doing drive by events to reach families so we used this as an opportunity to recruit and spread awareness on CCCAP as well as other resources in the community.
 - 538 parents requested information on child care this past year through the Colorado Shines portal. PFC assisted the final weeks of the Colorado COVID Child Care Collaborative for Weld County. 56 child care homes and centers offered child care to 374 parents and 577 children from March 23-May 24, 2020. Weld County had the capacity to serve 2,516 children.
 - Family Business Solutions (FBS) is a benefit that businesses offer to offset the cost of child care for their employees. Promises for Children manages the process. This past year 25 parents, 38 children and 22 providers participated in FBS.
 - There are 223 (a decrease of 11 providers from the previous year) licensed child care providers (centers, preschools, and homes) in Weld County. 11 individuals attended a pre-licensing training.
 - 13 licensed child care providers opened their doors for business, a decrease of 9% from the previous year. Another 13 individuals were in the cue to become licensed

but due to COVID they were not able to complete due to licensing inspections being cancelled.

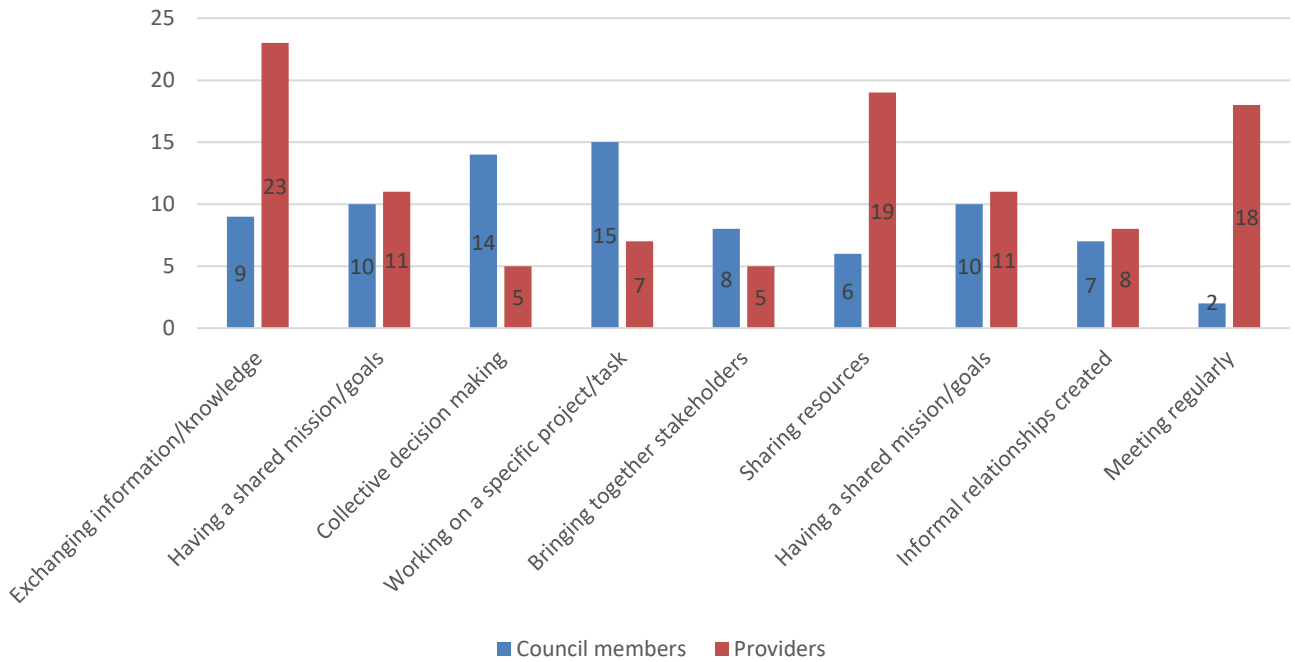
- PFC works to increase quality in child care environments to promote school readiness for all. Colorado Shines is the quality rating improvement system for all licensed child care providers. In Weld County, 6 providers are a Level 5, 23 providers are a level 4, 7 are a level 3, 47 are a level 2, the remaining 189 are a level 1.
 - \$103,683 in capital improvement, quality improvement materials, and quality improvement coaching was awarded to 25 licensed child care providers in Weld County through the Colorado Shines Quality Improvement Program and over 225 hours of child care professional development clock hours were offered.
 - 249 children who utilize CCCAP are currently receiving child care in a high quality program (level 3-5). This is down from 679 at this time last year (a 37% decrease)
 - In order to increase the number of high quality CCCAP slots, the number of providers accepting CCCAP needs to increase as well. 18 providers signed CCCAP contracts with Weld County Department of Human Services as part of the Weld Child Care collaboration. Qualified exempt providers made up the majority with 16 new providers or a 75% increase from last fiscal year.
 - 43 early childhood education students at Aims Community College and child care providers were awarded a total of \$14,030 in scholarship funding for the 2019-2020 academic school year.
 - 1,077 (3% increase) early childhood professionals credentialed in Weld County. Credentials ensure that all professionals caring and educating young child have the same core knowledge. There are 6 levels of credentials with 1 being the lowest and 6 being the highest. For example, a level 3 early childhood credential qualifies an individual as an early childhood teacher (lead teacher).
 - 50 individuals completed the Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler (EQIT) care 16-week course offered in English & Spanish. EQIT is for those who are currently working with or plan to work with infants and toddlers.
 - 46 women caring for 394 children completed the PASO Institute, demonstrating 95-100% improvement in knowledge of child development through pre/post testing. Nine have applied for their Child Development Associate (CDA), with another 19 working towards the application. Due to COVID we saw providers struggling to pay for the cost of classes. We were able to stop charging for the PASO classes, provide care packages with various high need, hard to find supplies, and offered scholarships for the CDA application to some providers hit hardest by the impacts of COVID-19.
- Systems Building: Build a seamless system between parents, families, child care providers, and service providers to deliver early childhood services in the areas of early care and education, family support, mental health, and health.
 - The third annual council survey was sent out in May/June to assess the council's impact, partnerships, infrastructure, and ability to meet our strategic goals. The survey was sent to 95 council members, friends of the council, child care providers participating in Colorado Shines, and FFN providers. 32 of 37 council members and 37

of 58 child care providers (licensed and FFN) took the survey (for a total response rate of 73%). Key results are below.

In your opinion, how successful has PFC been at reaching our goals?

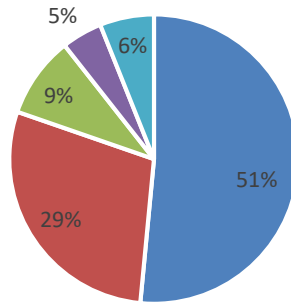


What aspects of collaboration would you like to see more of? Check all that apply.



During the past 12 months, approximately how many partnerships or connections with other organizations have you created because of your contact with PFC?

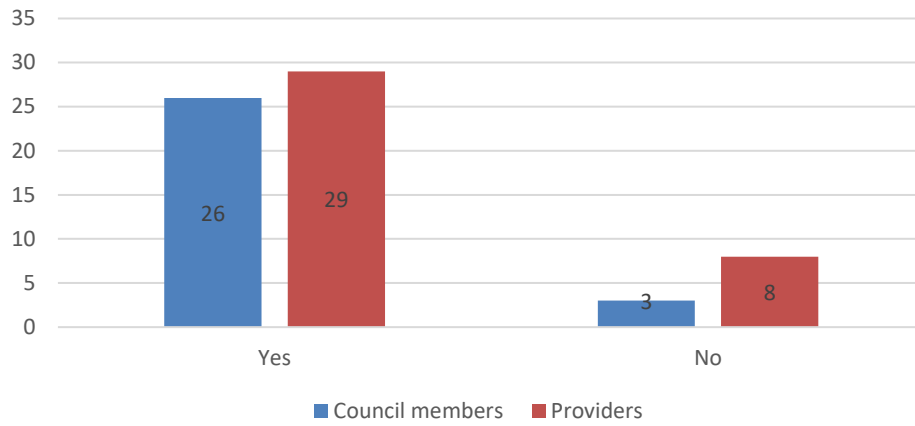
- 1-3 partnerships/connections
- 4-6 partnerships/connections
- 7-9 partnerships/connections
- 10-11 partnerships/connections
- 12+ partnerships/connections



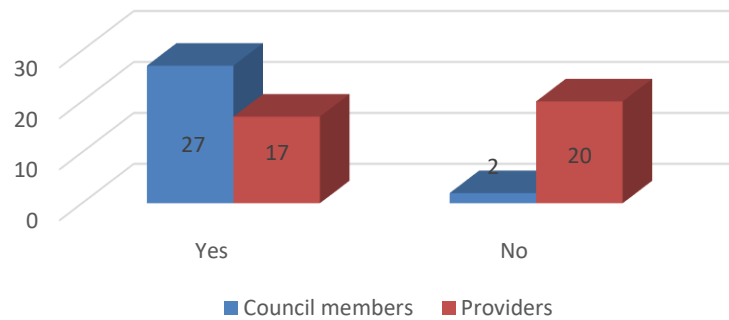
Responses to “who else do you think needs to be at the table?”:

- I'm not sure. I think that we have many people at the table, but I'm not certain about the diversity that comes to the table. I feel that we could have a more diverse board (i.e. more people of different races--we have a large refugee population and I'd love to see more representation at the table, etc.).
- It's more about the authority of the people at the table rather than not having the right organizations.
- More representation from child and health care.
- There has been good strides in getting more individuals involved that can make decisions for their agencies or business' to impact change. The potential development of an executive council may help move the ECC forward to more collective decision making. There was a good beginning before COVID and then good connecting regularly to address the crisis needs.
- I feel city council, commissioner, more business owners.

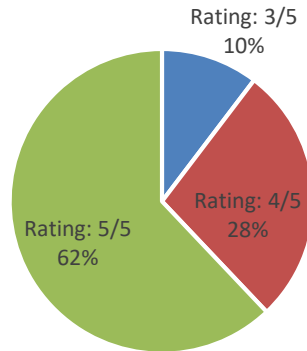
Are you familiar with the RoadMap4Kids resource that launched in April 2018?



Are you familiar with the Promises for Children, Weld County's Early Childhood Council e-newsletter that was launched in November 2017?



One a scale of 1 (low) - 5 (high), my organization benefits from being involved in the early childhood council.



- Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
 - Recruit and retain licensed child care programs, particularly in areas of the state that have been identified as child care deserts as defined by the Office of Early Childhood and child care desert mapping.
 - Guidance was given to 277 individuals this fiscal year who were interested in becoming licensed providers.
 - 11 potential future child care providers attended pre-licensing trainings.
 - Provide technical assistance and resources to eligible child care programs, to ensure optimal awareness and engagement in statewide initiatives, such as the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Professional Development Information System (PDIS), and the Targeted Quality Improvement Program (formally CCCAP).
 - CCR&R worked with PFC to encourage provider engagement with QRIS, PDIS, and CCCAP. Weld County has six Colorado Shines level 5 rated programs!
 - Partner with PFC, community partners, public agencies, and private entities including faith-based and community based childcare providers, to better understand the local market and increase the supply and quality of child care services.
 - CCR&R works closely with Mile High United Way, sharing updates, vacancies, and additional information as requested. Mile High United Way gave referrals to 538 people requesting child care.
 - CCR&R worked with partners such as Weld County Family Child Care Association, the Department of Human Services, Promises for Children and EQIT to encourage Weld County providers to attend continuing education and professional development opportunities and participate in Colorado Shines. 50

individuals completed the EQIT course. 213 individuals attended professional development courses.

- Implement the requirements of the Colorado Child Care Disaster Plan as defined in the state plan mandated by the Child Care and Development Block Grant of 2014 (S. 1086).
 - The disaster plan, templates, and state information is shared on UWWC's website; 148 people visited the page this year. 79 out of 223 (35%) providers said they had a disaster plan in place.
- Collect data, provide information on the supply of and demand for childcare services in Weld County, and enter such information within the Colorado Shines Technology System.
 - 130 providers (58%) out of 223 were updated this far this fiscal year.

Key Strategies

- Coordinating the efforts of Weld County organizations working in early care and education through the Early Childhood Council.
- Provision of direct service programs when a gap in service is identified and PFC has the capacity to respond.
 - Best Start for Babies and Toddlers: 10-week program teaching parents and caregivers necessary parenting skills to which they may not otherwise have access
 - Bright by Three: from birth to three, short visitations helping parents understand childhood development, parenting best practices, and available community resources
 - Child Care Provider Professional Development: training opportunities that offer child care providers continuing education credits
 - Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care: a 48-hour curriculum to improve child care quality and increase the number of licensed providers
 - Family Business Solutions: works with local businesses to create family friendly work environments and facilitates employer-sponsored child care financial assistance
 - Northern Colorado Children's Festival: an annual one-day, free event for parents, caregivers, and their children to engage in a variety of hands-on, quality, educational activities helping connect parents to resources
 - PASO Institute: teaches Spanish-speaking home-based providers childhood development and child care best practices and connects them with resources, continuing education, and other providers
- Locally managing several grant-funded initiatives to provide a seamless web of support for children and families in Weld County such as Colorado Shines Quality Improvement, Systems Building, Buell Foundation, and many more.
- Providing advocacy at the state level when there is an opportunity for change that aligns with the UWWC mission and guiding values.

Next Steps/How Strategies Change

For 2020-2021 PFC will continue the work detailed in our original statement of work. Planned changes in strategy are noted below:

- Advocate for efforts to sustain child care providers due to the impact of COVID.
- Increase alignment with Weld Child Care team.
- Work to roll out a diaper bank for Weld County to service partner agencies who support families.
- Continue to integrate United Way of Weld County's early childhood collective impact process within the council work.
- Seek funding to continue Spanish and English PASO Institutes.

Success Stories

- "As with small businesses across America, the pandemic has created a scary situation for me as a child care provider. It is a very different time relationally with parents. Many providers have contract clauses that require parents to continue to pay when we are closed for vacation or sickness or if parents go on vacation. COVID-19 has many parents working from home or on unpaid leave; either they don't need child care or they can't pay for it. This puts providers in a difficult relational and financial position. Often we have worked with families for years and years; we do not enforce contracts when they do not need us for the time being or are unable to pay. Furthermore, providers that have stayed open during the pandemic have had lower enrollment than normal. Fewer children means less revenue. Less revenue means we cannot pay our bills. Not being able to pay our bills means putting mortgages in forbearance, asking the Small Business Administration for grants or loans, and more. Many of these options increase our debt. Add to this that the cost of business is increasing due to the expenses of PPE and additional cleaning supplies. All in all it is a difficult situation for child care providers in Weld County and everywhere in the United States. I am concerned that soon a number of providers will close their businesses forever." *A Weld County child care provider*
- "I am proud to serve this community alongside of Promises for Children. You all are really stepping up. The care packages that you have organized is very impressive. Awesome work you guys!" *A partner agency*
- "I was pleasantly surprised to receive a UW care package of support today! You guys are awesome and the guy and gal dropping off the bags were all smiles (behind the masks) and that was welcome too! Thanks again! Stay Safe - Stay Healthy - Wash Your Hands!" *A Weld County child care provider*
- "Thank you so much for the diapers and wipes. You all are amazing and so very appreciated." *A Weld County parent*
- "Oh my goodness thank you so much for the diapers and the books and Chick-Fil-A gift cards! That is a huge relief. The size 5 diapers will probably last a week and the size 2 diapers about 4 days, so that is great. Thank you so much!" *A Weld County parent*