

## Childcare Concept Paper

**Problem:** One of the main childcare facilities in Florence Colorado is scheduled to close. It is our understanding that this facility cared for approximately 300 children. The closure will add additional stress to a limited childcare system with long waiting lists and families who are seeking childcare services. Employers will also be impacted when their employees lack reliable childcare services. Currently there are several major employers in the Fremont/Pueblo area that struggle to recruit and retain staff. The lack of local childcare resources adds to this difficulty by reducing the candidate pool and retention of those with young children.

**Proposed solution:** Create a collaborative childcare learning center that provides services to local families and operates as a learning lab/internship placement for PCC Early Childhood Education students while providing opportunities for screening/intervention for developmental and mental health issues.

**Program Benefits:** The proposed center can serve as a strong employment retention/recruitment resource for local employers. It can also help local students obtain hands-on experience working with children and families. Once these students graduate, they will have coaching and business development assistance to start their own childcare centers. Families with young children will have a reliable childcare resource and referrals to auxiliary resources as needed. Children will also benefit by having safe childcare and early screening and intervention for developmental or behavioral health needs.

### Program Collaborators:

- Facility management and service provision – New grant/community funded PCC Early Childhood Education program childcare center administrators and staff along with student interns/work study
- Consultation and student scholarships – Family Center Early Childhood Council
- Coaching – Rocky Mountain Children’s Discovery Center
- Mental health screening, intervention, and referral – ECHO and PCC Behavioral Health AAS interns
- Business Spinoff support – FEDC
- Financial support –
  - Early Childhood Council grants – See <https://cdec.colorado.gov/early-childhood-councils>
  - Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) Children, Youth and Families grants – See <https://bha.colorado.gov/resources/funding-opportunities>
  - USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program in Colorado – See <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/co>
  - Employer financial support
  - Family childcare fees and employer partial subsidies for families employed at their agencies

### Program Components:

- PCC will run a childcare center in the community with support of their early childhood education students, who will receive hands on experience in childcare services and administration
- Community collaborators such as FEDC will work with PCC to submit a grant USDA Community Facilities Grant Program application to establish the childcare facility
- The program will receive supplemental services from resources such as ECHO to screen for developmental and mental health issues and provide on-site intervention or referral to ensure early intervention and services for identified problems. Collaborators can apply for a BHA grant to help support these services
- Early Childhood Education students can apply for Early Childhood Council grants and PCC financial aid to support their education costs
- High school interns/work study could help staff the facility and learn about early childhood education and mental health services
- Rocky Mountain Children's Discovery Center has an established childcare facility and offered to provide coaching to get another childcare facility started in the community
- Community employers such as DOC, Centura, etc. will be approached to provide a childcare subsidies to employees who use the center or contribute direct support to the center as a recruitment and retention resource.
- Other community service providers/charitable organizations could be approached to provide financial support or ancillary services for families (e.g., workforce center, Solvista, New Horizon Ministries, Loaves and Fishes, City Council and County Commissioners)
- Graduating PCC Early Childhood Education students can receive start-up assistance from FEDC if they want to start a daycare service in the community.