



**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON CHILD SAFETY AND FAMILY EMPOWERMENT**  
**MARCH 20, 2025 | 10:00 AM**  
**2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM (SUITE 200)**  
**1700 WEST WASHINGTON STREET PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007**

A general meeting of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment convened on March 20, 2025, notice duly given.

MEMBERS PRESENT (17)	MEMBERS ABSENT (06)
Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair	Detective Jeremy Brazell
*Calley Anderson (proxy for Jillian Aja)	Dr. Terry Crist
Berisha Black	Paul Mulligan
*Obed Escobar	Katie O'Dell
*Marie Fordney	Torrie Taj
Ann Carver (proxy for Tonya Hamilton)	Jeff Taylor
Patricia Swing (proxy for Malcolm Hightower)	
*Leah Landrum Taylor	
Claire Louge	
*Sara Micflikier (proxy for Rachel Mitchell)	
James Molina	
Kathryn Ptak	
*Leslie Reprogle	
*Ashley Baumgartner (proxy for Abi Saifi)	
Michael Hunter (proxy for Mark Upton)	
*Ginger Ward	
Richard Yarbough	
STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT (04)	
Chantel Hutchinson, GOYFF	Jenni Goodall, presenter
Belinda Ray, GOYFF	Tené Marion, presenter

*\*Indicates Virtual Attendance*

**CALL TO ORDER**

- Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair, called the [Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment \(CSFE\)](#) meeting to order at **10:08 AM** with **17** members and **six** staff/guests present. She reviewed the Council meeting procedures, welcomed all those joining via Zoom, and thanked them for their flexibility.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- With the quorum met, Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair, requested a review of the **January 16, 2025**, meeting minutes before requesting a motion to approve them as drafted.
  - Director Kathryn Ptak moved to approve the meeting minutes as drafted.
  - Berisha Black seconded the motion.
- Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair, asked for a discussion of the minutes, and no members requested amendments.
- Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair, called a vote, and at **10:12 AM**, the motion to approve the meeting minutes as drafted passed with no dissenting votes.

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY UPDATE**

- Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair, introduced Director Kathryn Ptak to discuss the [Arizona Department of Child Safety's \(DCS\)](#) goals, priorities, and objectives.

- **Kathryn Ptak** thanked **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, for the introduction. She explained that she has been with DCS for over 10 years. She is a former foster parent, current adoptive parent, birth parent, and finally, a pet parent.
- Kathryn Ptak clarified that the Department of Child Safety (DCS) is not bankrupt. Unlike other state agencies, DCS must obtain permission from the [Arizona Legislature](#) to move funds between budget line items. They are currently seeking to adjust the budget related to congregate care. She mentioned that she could provide an update by the end of this meeting; if not, she will do so at the next Council meeting.
- Kathryn Ptak presented an overview of DCS's five strategic objectives. She expects the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026 to align closely with the [SFY 2025 Strategic Plan](#). The SFY 2026 Strategic Plan must be submitted to the Governor by March 31, 2025. The final version of the plan will be available in the coming weeks. The five objectives include:
  - Increase the percentage of families receiving services.
  - Increase the percentage of children safely achieving permanency within 12 months.
  - Reduce the disparity ratio between Black and African American children and White children.
  - Decrease the turnover rate of DCS employees.
  - Increase the percentage of funding allocated to family life settings.
    - DCS's breakthrough project in SFY 2025 aimed to reduce reliance on congregate care. In SFY 2026, the focus is on increasing the percentage of resources allocated to family life settings. While this presents a more positive perspective, it ultimately measures the same outcome.
- **Kathryn Ptak** explained that the DCS recently completed its annual Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), a federal evaluation that assesses how the DCS delivers services to families. During this review, DCS discovered that parents seek higher-quality engagement with their children. In response to this feedback, DCS plans to integrate the stakeholders' input into its strategic plan.
- **Ann Carver** asked about the support the Council can provide and the assistance needed from the community.
  - **Kathryn Ptak** answered that if you hear something about the Department, just ask.
  - **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, asked if the Council could be an appropriate body to disseminate this information in addition to contacting DCS directly.
    - **Kathryn Ptak** agreed that that is a good option.
- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, informed Council members that those interested in specific DCS issues should email **Amy Peep**.
- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, asked how the public can best contact DCS.
  - **Kathryn Ptak** answered that if the issue is case-related, contact the [DCS Office of the Ombudsman](#) at [ombudsman@azdcs.gov](mailto:ombudsman@azdcs.gov) or [\(602\)-364-0777](tel:602-364-0777).
  - **Kathryn Ptak** answered that if the public has a general question, they can contact DCS by emailing [GeneralInquiries@AZDCS.GOV](mailto:GeneralInquiries@AZDCS.GOV) or submit a public records request at [DCSRecordsRequest@azdcs.gov](mailto:DCSRecordsRequest@azdcs.gov).
    - For more information, [click here](#).

#### CHICANOS POR LA CAUSA PARENTING ARIZONA PROGRAM

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, introduced **Jenni Goodall** from [Chicanos Por La Causa's \(CPLC\) Parenting Arizona Program](#) to speak to the Council.
  - **Jenni Goodall** holds a Bachelor's degree in Family and Human Development and Psychology from Arizona State University (ASU) and a Master's in Business Administration from Grand Canyon University (GCU).
  - She was appointed Director of Parenting Arizona in June 2021 after serving as the Regional Manager for five years and as the Community-Based Supervisor for three years. Jenni has been with CPLC for over fifteen years. She is certified by the National Family Support Network as a trainer for the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support. Additionally, she serves on the Steering Committee for the Maricopa Family Support Alliance.
- **Jenni Goodall** began the presentation by explaining that CPLC was established in 1969 to promote political and economic empowerment across five key impact areas: Housing, Economic Development, Health and Human Services, Education, and Advocacy.
- **Jenni Goodall** explained that the Parenting Arizona Program was originally Parents Anonymous, founded in 1977, and became Parenting Arizona when it joined CPLC in 2004. The program's mission is to promote strong families and improve the lives of children by empowering parents to thrive. Its vision is to create a community where parents have the skills to raise healthy and prosperous children.
- **Jenni Goodall** explained the services offered by the Parenting Arizona Program:

- Home Visitation
  - Available in Globe, Hopi, Sierra Vista, Yuma, Flagstaff, Winslow, Navajo, and Havasupai
  - Utilizes the evidence-based Parents as Teachers curriculum
  - Promotes health and optimal development, preparing children under five for school readiness
- Family Resource Center (FRC)
  - Located in Guadalupe
  - Offers group activities, parenting classes, family enrichment programs, and access to community resources
  - Uses the Nurturing Parenting, Raising a Reader, Active Parenting, and Abriendo Puertas
- Parent Resource Coordination
  - Services are available in Cochise, Mohave, and La Paz counties.
  - Families receive up to 90 days of case management to connect them with local resources and build support systems.
- Northern Arizona
  - School-based services include home visiting, community resources and referrals, parenting education, family enrichment programs, life skills training, and food and clothing banks.
    - Programs utilize the Active Parenting curriculum.
  - Community-based education services are available in Flagstaff, Williams, Tuba City, Page, Winslow, Hopi Reservation, Fredonia, and Kaibab Ban de Paiute.
    - Uses the Motherhood is Sacred Fatherhood is Sacred curriculum
- Community-Based Education
  - Parent education classes occur throughout the state
  - Curriculums include Nurturing Parenting, Towards No Drugs, and Active Parenting
  - Promotes parental knowledge of child development, positive discipline, school readiness, and healthy communication
- Homeless Youth Street Outreach
  - Street outreach to homeless youth ages 18-24
  - Addresses the youth's needs on the spot
  - Services include resources, referrals, and basic needs such as hygiene bags, food, and clothing.
- Hearing and Vision Screening
  - Provides free hearing and vision screenings for children ages 1 to 5
  - The goal is to identify concerns before the child starts school and refer any problems to the appropriate healthcare provider.
- **Jenni Goodall** explained travel capacity, resource gaps in rural areas, and the complexity of needs are the current challenges and barriers CPLC faces.
- **Jenni Goodall** provided CPLC's upcoming events.
  - March 17, 2025: Pendergast FRC Hearing and Vision Screening Event
  - March 21, 2025: Cesar Chavez Library Hearing and Vision Screening Event
  - March 24, 2025: Beuf FRC Hearing and Vision Screening Event
  - March 29, 2025: Kiwanis Kids Event in Bullhead City
  - April 5, 2025: Sierra Vista Community Baby Shower
  - April 7, 2025: Yuma Virtual Group Connection Child Abuse Prevention Month
  - April 14, 2025: Sierra Vista Water Safety Workshop
  - April 24, 2025: Peach Springs Earth Day Event
- **Claire Louge** inquired about the funding received for parent resource coordination and how CPLC coordinators locate resources.
  - **Jenni Goodall** mentioned that First Things First financially supports this initiative. The coordinators have experienced the most success by traveling to different locations, attending town halls, and using word of mouth. However, these methods may not be accessible in rural communities, so they emphasize the importance of face-to-face interactions to build trust.
- **Berisha Black** asked if CPLC's FRC offers utility assistance to families and if CPLC can receive referrals through community care.
  - **Jenni Goodall** answered that the CPLC Community Services Department can offer APS assistance. Referrals are not required. Individuals can call or walk into the FRC to receive services.
- **Ann Carver** asked what success CPLC has had regarding travel capacity.

- **Jenni Goodall** stated that CPLC has secured funding for bus passes and gas cards and facilitates virtual visits. Additionally, CPLC organizes Baby Swap events, where parents can bring items that their babies have outgrown and exchange them with other parents.
- **James Molina** asked how CPLC connects with foster care youth for the Homeless Youth Street Outreach.
  - Jenni Goodall explained that this outreach focuses on providing immediate case management to address urgent needs, such as food and hygiene items. As individuals become more familiar with the services offered over time, they may become interested in connecting with housing and other forms of assistance.
- To view **Jenni Goodall's** presentation, [click here](#).

#### DCS CULTURAL BROKERS PILOT PROGRAM

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, introduced **Tenè Marion**, who would give the second presentation about DCS' Cultural Brokers program.
  - **Tenè Marion** currently serves as the Program Administrator for the DCS Office of Prevention. With over 14 years of experience at DCS, she has held various roles, starting as an Investigation Specialist and advancing to Supervisor and Program Manager. Her hands-on experience in the field has expanded her expertise and enabled her to develop effective strategies to prevent families from entering the child protection system.
  - Tenè is passionate about ensuring that Arizona's children and families thrive. She serves as the State Lead for the Children's Bureau Child Abuse Prevention, is a member of the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, chairs the DCS Internal African American Racial Disparity Committee, and is also a member of the Governor's Commission to Prevent Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence and the Children's Justice Taskforce.
- **Tenè Marion** explained that the Cultural Brokers Program was established in Fresno County, California. The program aims to enhance the well-being of at-risk families by offering culturally appropriate services that help them navigate government agencies and programs while addressing their unique needs. She noted that children and families achieve better outcomes when child welfare agencies work with the community to provide intervention services.
- **Tenè Marion** explained the community partnership aspect of the Cultural Brokers program.
  - The Cultural Broker Program is a community-based initiative in partnership with DCS. It is essential for achieving positive outcomes for families who are often overrepresented in child welfare and face systemic barriers to accessing services.
  - Pilot program in five Maricopa County zip codes.
  - The program's scope of work is nearing finalization.
  - DCS will issue a Competitive Request for Partnership (RFP) in early April.
  - Estimating the collective response to an average of 30 reports each month.
- **Tenè Marion** explained the key benefits of the Cultural Broker Program:
  - It helps bridge the knowledge gap between families and child welfare staff, enhancing understanding of safety, risk factors, and family strengths related to child protection and well-being.
  - The program assists families in navigating the complex systems of child welfare and other institutions to access services that support child safety, family resilience, and overall well-being.
  - It improves the quality of relationships between child welfare staff and families. Brokers offer family-specific, one-on-one support to parents, addressing safety issues and other unmet needs to enhance child safety.
- **Tenè Marion** explained the key functions of the Joint Emergency Response as follows:
  - Attend pre-commencement clinical supervision meetings.
  - Accompanied the DCS Specialist during the initial engagement and interviews.
  - Encourage family members to actively participate in the investigation, assessment, planning, safety actions, and other activities that promote child safety.
  - Provide insight and feedback when conducting present danger assessments and planning.
  - Collaborate with the DCS Specialist to determine appropriate safety actions, if necessary.
  - Help identify protective, non-offending family members who can be caregivers if needed.
  - Complete a family needs assessment and connect the family to relevant resources.
  - Establish a schedule for one-on-one support for the family following the initial engagement.
- **Tenè Marion** discussed the expected successes of the Cultural Brokers program. The program aims to enhance communication between the DCS and families, leading to a better understanding of safety, risk factors, and family dynamics. This understanding is crucial for effectively navigating the child welfare system.

- In Fresno County, CA, the program has shown promising results: 91% of families who utilized Broker services did not enter the child welfare system within six months of the joint response. Additionally, 78% of these families reported improved communication and trust with the Department of Social Services.
- Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair, inquired if the program has been implemented and if community-based organizations can apply for participation.
  - **Tenè Marion** explained that they are still in the planning stages but estimate that the solicitation will be released in April. She also confirmed that DCS has recently met with community-based organizations to discuss this program.
- **Ann Carver** was excited to hear about this program and asked what type of lived experience is incorporated during the planning stages.
  - **Tenè Marion** explained that community agencies' involvement varies, but organizations need to engage parents in both the program and decision-making processes. She also emphasized the importance of the community's trust in the organization.
- To view **Tenè Marion's** presentation, [click here](#).

### PILGRIM REST FAMILY RESOURCE HUB

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, introduced **Berisha Black** to speak to the Council about [Pilgrim Rest Foundation's \(PRF\) Community HUB](#).
  - **Berisha Black** is an expert with firsthand experience in the foster care system. Having spent 15 years in care in California, she eventually aged out of the system. Berisha holds a degree in social work and has worked in the field for over 20 years. She serves as the Community Hub Director at the Pilgrim Rest Foundation and has been part of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment for about eight years.
  - Using her expertise, Berisha has mentored youth, trained foster parents and social workers, influenced public policy, and helped develop essential programs for youth and families.
- **Richard Yarbough** explained [that Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church](#) was founded in 1922 to serve as a place of worship and community for African American Christians. Established during significant social and racial challenges, the church quickly became its congregation's spiritual and cultural anchor. Over the decades, Pilgrim Rest has grown in membership and influence, broadening its mission to include various outreach programs, community services, and educational initiatives. The church has consistently adapted to the changing needs of its community while remaining steadfast in its commitment to faith and service. Today, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church stands as a testament to resilience, faith, and the enduring power of community.
- **Richard Yarbough** explained that the Pilgrim Rest Foundation, Inc., established in 1993, serves as the non-profit arm of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church. Its mission is to create a community where individuals have hope and are inspired to be productive, collaborative citizens who contribute to improving the lives of others. The foundation aims to address and fulfill the essential needs of families within the community. Through various programs and services, the foundation provides support in areas such as education, healthcare, housing, and food security. By leveraging the resources and compassion of the church, Pilgrim Rest Foundation, Inc. plays a crucial role in uplifting and empowering individuals and families, fostering a stronger and more resilient community.
- **Richard Yarbough** explained that the work of the Pilgrim Rest Foundation exemplifies the principles of a healthy community, as outlined by the Vitalyst Health Foundation. The foundation creates an environment where all individuals can thrive by addressing essential areas such as education, healthcare, housing, and food security. The Pilgrim Rest Foundation promotes physical, mental, and social well-being through its comprehensive programs and services, ensuring every family can reach their full potential. This holistic approach strengthens individual lives and helps build a more resilient and equitable community.
- **Richard Yarbough** explained the elements of a healthy community.
  - Equity in healthy communities means ensuring everyone has fair access to the resources and opportunities necessary for their well-being, regardless of their background or circumstances. It involves actively addressing and dismantling barriers that create disparities, promoting inclusivity, and fostering an environment where all individuals can thrive. The Pilgrim Rest Foundation Community HUB is dedicated to this mission by providing targeted support and collaborating with community partners to create equitable outcomes for all families, thereby contributing to a more just and balanced society.
  - Resiliency in healthy communities means adapting, recovering, and thriving in facing challenges and adversities. It involves fostering strong social connections, equitable access to resources, and a supportive environment that empowers individuals and families. Resilient communities can better withstand and bounce back from crises by promoting physical, mental, and social

well-being, ensuring long-term stability and growth. The Pilgrim Rest Foundation Community HUB exemplifies this resilience by addressing disparities and building a robust support network, contributing to a healthier, more equitable community for all.

- **Berisha Black** highlighted the necessity of the Community HUB.
  - The ongoing health, education, and economic disparities in Arizona, combined with a history of familial and systemic trauma, emphasize the urgent need for the Pilgrim Rest Foundation Community HUB. These disparities have significantly impacted African American families and other families of color, creating barriers to equitable access to essential resources and opportunities. The Community HUB addresses these challenges directly by providing targeted support and services to bridge these gaps. By focusing on health, education, and economic stability, the HUB strives to cultivate a healthier, more educated, and financially stable community, ensuring all families have the resources they need to thrive.
  - Additionally, the Community HUB aims to reduce the disproportionate representation of Black children and families in the child welfare system. In Arizona, Black and African Americans make up 5% of the population, yet they represent 18% of children in the foster care system.
- **Berisha Black** explained that the Pilgrim Rest Foundation Community HUB is a key component of a vision of building practical systems. The HUB collaborates with various community partners to ensure all families achieve equitable outcomes. By fostering strong connections and partnerships, it utilizes a diverse range of resources and expertise to address the complex needs of the community. This collaborative approach offers comprehensive and inclusive services, promoting shared equity, resilience, and empowerment goals. Together, these efforts create a strong support network that enhances the well-being and opportunities of every family, working toward a more just and equitable society.
- **Berisha Black** explained that the Community HUB is working in direct partnership with DCS to create an innovative approach to address the needs of families whose hotline reports do not meet the criteria for an investigation. Family advocates show great empathy and compassion, working closely with families to help them navigate the complex network of available resources. The HUB provides a “safe space” where families can express their needs, strengths, and emotions openly. The foundation strives to ensure that no one has inadequate resources; if they cannot meet a family’s needs, they collaborate with others who can provide additional support.
  - For this pilot, they receive referrals monthly from DCS screened-out calls that don’t warrant an investigation at the hotline level. Most of the families lack resources.
  - The pilot works in six zip codes: 85008, 85009, 85040, 85041, 85035, and 85033.
- **Claire Louge** thanked **Berisha Black** and **Richard Yarbough** for all they do to support the community.
- **Richard Yarbough** apologized for being late to today’s meeting as he met with a local philanthropist who, in 2024, provided \$180,000 in grants to non-profits and other community-based organizations. They are planning a second cohort for this year.
- To view **Berisha Black’s** presentation, [click here](#).

## COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATES

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Chair**, regretfully announced that she would have to leave early and that **Amy Peep** would ask for updates and close the meeting.
- **Amy Peep** invited members to give any updates to the Council.
  - **Claire Louge** provided updates for [Prevent Child Abuse Arizona \(PCA AZ\)](#):
    - The 31st [Child Abuse Prevention Conference](#) will be in July (7/29-7/30). Registration will open in April, and scholarships are available.
    - They are collaborating with DCS to create a website identifying the nearest FRC. This project is ongoing, and a release date has not yet been set.
    - PCCAZ is developing a parallel website to support FRCs, allowing people to contribute financially or find volunteering opportunities.
    - Attended a [Southwest Human Development](#) event and expressed gratitude for their contributions to the community.
  - **Ann Carver** expressed her interest in supporting adults who experienced foster care during their midlife years. She also introduced Belinda Ray, the new Executive Director of the [Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging](#), to the Council.
  - **Marie Fordney** noted that the [Southern Arizona Children’s Advocacy Center](#) leads the Child Abuse Regional Councils for Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, and Santa Cruz counties. Each of these Councils will be hosting events and is willing to share information with the broader Council.
  - **Leslie Reprogle** wanted to collaborate with **Ann Carver’s** team to investigate how involvement in the child welfare system impacts individuals in midlife. She mentioned a [book](#) and [TV show](#) titled

“Will Trent,” which features characters who grew up in foster care and explores how this background affects their adult relationships.

- **Amy Peep** announced that GOYFF has an open Request for Grant Application (RFGA) for the [Arizona Parents Commission on Drug Education and Prevention Grant](#). Approximately \$4 million will be awarded to organizations throughout Arizona to implement programs that enhance and increase parental or caregiver involvement and focus on substance abuse prevention for one or numerous substances.
  - The deadline to [apply](#) is Friday, April 4, 2025.
  - If members have any questions, email [procurement@az.gov](mailto:procurement@az.gov).

#### UPCOMING MEETING

- **Amy Peep** reminded members that the next meeting will be on **May 15, 2025**, at **10:00 AM** in the Executive Tower. It will be offered in a hybrid format, with members able to attend in person or virtually.

#### ADJOURNMENT

- **Amy Peep** thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.
  - **Richard Yarbough** moved to adjourn the Council meeting.
  - **James Molina** seconded the motion.
- **Amy Peep** asked if further discussion was needed, and no members expressed the need for it.
- **Amy Peep** called for a vote. At **11:21 AM**, the motion to adjourn the meeting passed with no dissenting votes.

Dated 21 of Month 2025  
Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment  
Respectfully Submitted By:  
Amy Peep  
Human Trafficking Specialist, GOYFF