

Children's Council Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2025

Council Member	Appointed Council Member or Alternate	Affiliation	Title	Present
Alejandre, Melissa	Alternate	Family and Children Services	Program Manager	X
Arreola, Jose	Member	Community Alliance for Safety and Peace	Director	X
Askew, Wendy	Member	District #4	Supervisor	
Astengo, Berenice	Alternate	Monterey County Free Libraries	Managing Librarian	
Baldwin, Dan	Member	Community Foundation for Monterey County	President/CEO	
Bangs, Randy	Member	Soledad Unified School District	Superintendent	X
Bhardwaj, Jaskiart "Jessica"	Alternate	City of Salinas		
Blitch, Susan	Member	County Counsel	County Counsel	
Boykin, Zulieka	Member	Housing Authority	Executive Director	
Butler, Ashley	Alternate	Public Defender Office	Public Defender	
Castagna, Katy	Member	United Way Monterey County	President and CEO	x
Castro, Michael	Alternate	Community Foundation of Monterey County	Director of Community Investments	
Chapman, Susan	Member	Public Defender Office	Public Defender	
Cota, Caroline	Member	So Mo Co Joint Unified School District	Superintendent	X
Cutino, Annette	Alternate	County Counsel	Deputy County Counsel	
DaSilva, Charles	Alternate	Monterey County Sheriff's Office	Program Manager-Monterey County Jail	

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Diffenbaugh, PK	Alternate	Monterey Peninsula Unified School District	Superintendent	
Dunn, Laura	Member	Child Care Planning Council	Chair	X
Franks, Roderick	Member	Department of Social Services	Director	X
Guss, Deneen	Member	Monterey County Office of Education	Superintendent	X
Gomez, Claudia	Alternate	Door to Hope	Director of Family Services	
Jeronimo, Eva	Member	Department of Social Services	Deputy Director	X
Jimenez, Elsa	Member	Monterey County Health Department	Director of Health	X
Kenyon, Julie	Alternate	Probation Department		
Lal, Monica	Member	Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce	President/CEO	X
Lavorato, Sam Jr.	Alternate	Superior Court, Juvenile Justice Division	Judge	
Luzader, Lori	Member	Special Kids Connect	Executive Director	X
Madfis, Josh	Alternate	United Way Monterey County	Vice President Community Investments	X
McCabe, Ramona	Alternate	First 5 Monterey County	Director of Programs	
McCrae, Robin	Member	Community Human Services	Executive Director	
Mora, Eric	Alternate	District #4	Policy Analyst	X
Moreno, Dr. Edward	Alternate	Monterey County Health Department	Health Officer & Director of Public Health	

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Nassoura, Lana	Alternate	Monterey County District Attorney Office	Assistant District Attorney	
Nieto, Tina	Member	Monterey County Sheriff's Office	Sheriff	
Netniss, Jennifer	Alternate	Special Kids Connect	Education Director	
Quinones, Vanya	Member	CSU Monterey Bay	President	
Pacioni, Jeannine	Member	Monterey County District Attorney Office	District Attorney	
Pierce, Virginia R.	Member	CAPC	Director	X
Porras, Ralph	Alternate	Monterey County Office of Education	Assistant Superintendent	
Pulido, Ruben	Alternate	Chualar Union School District	Superintendent	
Ramirez, Jose	Alternate	Probation Department	Chief	X
Rhodes, Melanie	Member	Behavioral Health	Director	
Rodd, Francine	Member	First 5 of Monterey County	Executive Director	
Reuther, Krista	Alternate	Ohana Montage Health		X
Swick, Susan	Member	Ohana Montage Health	VP/Chief Mental Health Officer	
Theyer, Hillary	Member	Monterey County Free Libraries	Director	
Wouden, Michelle	Alternate	Public Defenders Office	Public Defender	

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Koehler, Sonja	Non-Member	Bright Beginnings	Director	x
Perez Diaz, Mayra	Non-Member	United Way	Coordinator of MCCC and Community Impact Director, Early Childhood Investments	
Diaz, Relindis	Non-Member	County of Monterey Children's Behavioral Health	RLP Facilitator	x

Item	Summary of discussion/review	Action/deliverable
1. Welcome and Introductions	Meeting called to order at 12:10p.m. by Deneen Guss	
2. Public Comment		None
3. Action Items a. Approve the minutes of the October 13, 2025, Monterey County Children's Council meeting b. Approve Designated Alternate Liz Perez-Cordero for Member – Melanie Rhodes		a. The minutes of the October 13, 2025, meeting were approved. Motion by Virginia Pierce and seconded by Laura Dunn. b. The At Large Member Seat, Dr. Michael Gutierrez was approved. Motion by Katy Castagna seconded by Elsa Jimenez.

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<p>4. Presentations/Discussions</p> <p>a. Bright Beginnings Update</p>	<p>Bright Beginnings update on Strategic Planning 2024+</p> <p>LEARN - Assess Initiative over last 10ish years October 2024-March 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trends in the overarching data indicators that illustrate the state of the systems that surround young children• Impact of the collaborative action aligned with the Strategic Framework• Influence of the Initiative on systems transformation locally <p>EVOLVE - Upgrade organizational structure March 2025-June 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in the backbone team supporting action• Changes in administrative & governance structures• Changes in funding sources <p>ALIGN - Connect to other related efforts January 2025-March 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insights learned from other local studies and initiatives, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ F5MC State of Early Childhood Systems○ Children's Council Annual Report Data Deep Dive○ MCHD's Building Safe & Thriving Communities (Gang Violence Prevention)○ Bright Futures Education Partnership's strategic planning○ Region Rise Together Inclusive Economic Blueprint○ Uplift Economic Development Listening Sessions○ The CA Partnership for the Future of Learning Listening Campaign○ Packard Foundation planning for Children &	
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<p>b. Smart Referral Network</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Families Initiative</p> <p>PLAN - Refresh our vision, goals and strategies January -June 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on what emerged during Learn, Evolve, Align: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are there any new audiences with whom we need to engage? ○ What updates do we need to make to our Guiding Principles, Drivers, Strategies, Indicators? ○ How should we now prioritize our collective resources and action? <p>Smart Referral Network Demo by Josh Madfis to show how community non profits and residents access the software, refer clients, enroll them in services and document outcomes. Post dem there was a discussion of use cases and how the Council could leverage the network to support Monterey County children and families.</p>	<p>SRN Presentation and case studies</p> <p>Department of Social Services to consider using the Smart Referral Network (SRN) for making referrals.</p> <p>The Council agreed to support use of the SRN to advance to goals of County Community Schools initiatives.</p>
<p>6. Meeting Adjourned</p>		<p>1:30pm</p>