

Children's Council Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2026

Council Member	Appointed Council Member or Alternate	Affiliation	Title	Present
Abraham Panni, Kera	Alternate	District #4	Senior Advisor Policy & Communications	
Alejandro, Melissa	Alternate	Family and Children Services	Program Manager	X
Anderson, Yuri	Alternate	District #4	Chief of Staff	X
Askew, Wendy	Member	District #4	Supervisor	
Astengo, Berenice	Alternate	Monterey County Free Libraries	Managing Librarian	
Bhardwaj, Jaskiart "Jessica"	Alternate	City of Salinas		
Blitch, Susan	Member	County Counsel	County Counsel	
Boykin, Zulieka	Member	Housing Authority	Executive Director	
Buenaventura, Raymond	Member	Public Defender Office	Public Defender	
Butler, Ashley	Alternate	Public Defender Office	Public Defender	
Castagna, Katy	Member	United Way Monterey County	President and CEO	X
Chavez, Jackie	Member	Department of Social Services		
Cota, Caroline	Member	So Mo Co Joint Unified School District	Superintendent	
DaSilva, Charles	Alternate	Monterey County Sheriff's Office	Program Manager-Monterey County Jail	
Diffenbaugh, PK	Alternate	Monterey Peninsula Unified School District	Superintendent	
Dunn, Laura	Member	Child Care Planning Council	Chair	X

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Franks, Roderick	Member	Department of Social Services	Director	X
Garrett, Jason	Alternate	Hartnell Community College	Interim Dean of Academic Affairs	X
Guss, Deneen	Member	Monterey County Office of Education	Superintendent	X
Gutierrez, Michael	Member	Hartnell Community College	Superintendent	
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	
Madfis, Josh	Alternate	United Way Monterey County	Vice President Community Investments	
McCabe, Ramona	Alternate	First 5 Monterey County	Director of Programs	
Mendoza, Miriam	Alternate	Monterey County Health Department	Assistant Director of Health Services	
Nassoura, Lana	Alternate	Monterey County District Attorney Office	Assistant District Attorney	X
Nieto, Tina	Member	Monterey County Sheriff's Office	Sheriff	
Netniss, Jennifer	Alternate	Special Kids Connect	Education Director	

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	Member	CSU Monterey Bay	President	
Pacioni, Jeannine	Member	Monterey County District Attorney Office	District Attorney	
Perez-Cordero, Liz	Alternate	Behavioral Health		X
Pierce, Virginia R.	Member	CAPC	Director	X
Porras, Ralph	Alternate	Monterey County Office of Education	Assistant Superintendent	
Ramirez, Jose	Alternate	Probation Department	Chief	
Rhodes, Melanie	Member	Behavioral Health	Director	
Rodd, Francine	Member	First 5 of Monterey County	Executive Director	X
Reuther, Krista	Alternate	Ohana Montage Health		
Swick, Susan	Member	Ohana Montage Health	VP/Chief Mental Health Officer	
Theyer, Hillary	Member	Monterey County Free Libraries	Director	X
Wouden, Michelle	Alternate	Public Defenders Office	Public Defender	
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	X

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Diaz, Relindis	Non-Member	Consultant	RLP Facilitator	X

Item	Summary of discussion/review	Action/deliverable
1. Welcome and Introductions	Meeting called to order at 12:15p.m. by Deneen Guss	
2. Public Comment		None
3. Action Items a. Approve the minutes of the August 10, 2026, Monterey County Children's Council meeting		a. The minutes of the August 10, 2026, meeting were approved. Motion by Francine Rodd and seconded by Roderick Franks.
4. Presentations/Discussions: a. Bright Beginnings Update b. Follow Up from Past Fiscal Year Presentations: I. MC Libraries c. Supporting Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness	Sonja Koehler provided a monthly update of initiatives events and work. Hilary Theyer provided a thorough update on progress made in libraries funding. Dr. Donna Smith provided an overview of supportive programs for homeless children and youth through MCOE.	Supporting Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness presentation
5. Meeting Adjourned		1:35pm