



## Community Services for Children

### Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 11 December 2023

Serving Bradford, Sullivan, Wyoming, Luzerne, Columbia & Montour counties

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## Region 11 News

### Helping Children Sleep Better

Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a volunteer organization that builds and donates beds to children and families in need in Luzerne County. If you or someone you know needs a bed for their child, please visit their website <https://shpbeds.org/chapter/pa-luzerne-co/>.



Also, the program is always looking for volunteers and helping hands to help build beds for the community. Visit the volunteer link [here](#).

### Toys for Tots

The mission of the Marine Toys for Tots program is to collect new, unwrapped toys and distribute those toys to less fortunate children. If you would like to make a donation or fill out an application to receive donated toys for your own family, please use the link below to locate your local chapter of Toys for Tots.

- [Toys for Tots](#)

### MARINE CORPS RESERVE



## Fork Over Love in Luzerne County

Fork Over Love's vision is clear: create a new system of care that nourishes the entire community. Families struggling for any reason can access a nutritious meal in a kind and compassionate environment. Please click on the following link to find December's schedule of free meal distribution dates and locations.

- [Food Distribution Schedule – Fork Over Love](#)

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## Looking for a Career Change?

Do you love children and want to make a difference in the lives of young families? Check out ECE hire for job postings in early childhood education. Click on the logo below to access the latest listings:



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## Parenting Corner

### What is Keystone STARS?

Keystone STARS is Pennsylvania's quality rating system that assigns a STAR rating to childcare providers. Providers meet state regulations for health and safety and offer a child-friendly atmosphere with teachers that partner with you to help your child learn. Childcare and Head Start programs within Keystone STARS earn a STAR 1 to STAR 4 rating based on some of the following quality standards:



#### Staff Education

- Early childhood teachers have the training and knowledge to work with young children.

#### Classroom/Learning Environment

- The program has a variety of materials and activities for each age level that makes it possible for children to learn something new every day!

#### Families and the Community

- Families and community members are encouraged to become a part of the learning program by participating in events and activities.

#### Leadership and Management

- A quality program has sound business practices to ensure your child's safety and wellbeing.

As programs earn a higher STAR, they are demonstrating that they are operating at a higher level of quality. Keystone STARS can help parents when selecting a childcare provider as they can seek out a program with a higher STAR rating. If you are currently enrolled in a program, ask them what their Keystone STAR

rating is. The early learning program you choose can affect how well your child does in kindergarten, school, and in life.

Children who attend a quality childcare or early learning program:

- Come to kindergarten ready to learn.
  - Do better in school.
  - Are more likely to graduate high school, attend college, and get good jobs.
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## Kindergarten Registration

Many school districts will begin Kindergarten registration in January. While most children begin Kindergarten at five years old, each school district sets their own cut-off dates based on the child's birthday. Click [here](#) for a complete listing of cut-off dates by school district across the state.

There are also some newsletters to help your child prepare for this transition time. Take a look and then [subscribe](#) to get the next release directly into your inbox.

- [Kindergarten Here I Come](#)
- [Kindergarten Here I Am](#)



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## Parent Project Podcast

Community Services for Children has been hosting the Parent Project Podcast to engage families in areas of common concern for parents. Experts provide perspectives on topics of health & safety, mental health, child transition and other important subjects.

This month, we are joined by Beth Thomlinson, Director of Community Resilience at the United Way of the Lehigh Valley. Beth discusses family resilience and how to bounce back from those tough times that all families experience. Click [here](#) to listen.

# PARENT PROJECT PODCAST



## Child Development



### Making Bedtime a Positive Experience

Many young children do not like going to bed, which can be a struggle for both the child and parent. Nighttime can become stressful for all involved! This does not have to be a daunting task at the end of a long day. Putting consistent practices in place can make this a positive and calming experience. Try some of these tips to help develop a good bedtime routine.

- Dim the lights and avoid screen time.
- Give your child a bath before bed.
- Brush your child's teeth.
- Engage in quiet activities, like doing puzzles or reading books together.
- Be consistent with a specific time to start "winding down" and then transition to their bedroom.
- Tuck your child into bed and say good night so that they know it is time to go to sleep.

Sometimes things can change in the environment physically or emotionally that can make these routines challenging, but being consistent is the key to help make the bedtime routine run smoothly.

## Resource & Referral

### Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania

Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania matches

parents, grandparents, guardians, and family members of children and adults with a disability or special need to a volunteer Peer Supporter. These supporters are chosen based on the referred person's criteria. Supporters offer a listening ear, time, patience and share information based on their unique experiences.



The staff at Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania are all parents of children or adults with a disability or special need. This puts them in a unique position to understand the “peaks and valleys” you may be experiencing raising a child with a disability or special need and offer you emotional support.

You can be connected with a Peer Supporter by calling 1-888-727-2706 or selecting the “Get Matched” button on the Home page of their website. A Parent to Parent of PA Regional Coordinator will reach out to the Referred Parent to start the match process.

Parents and Family members of children and adults with disabilities or special needs may be matched for the following:

- Physical disabilities
- Developmental disabilities
- Special health care needs
- Behavioral/mental health concerns
- Foster care or adoption
- Educational issues

Visit their website at [www.parenttoparent.org](http://www.parenttoparent.org)

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## Health & Safety

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### Coats & Car Seat Safety

In colder months, it's important to follow all car seat guidelines to keep your child safe and warm. Remember that most thick coats are not appropriate to wear in a car seat. In order for car seats and boosters to function properly, the straps need to remain tight against the child's chest. Winter coats and snowsuits change the way a child fits into the car seat. You can perform a quick test to see if the coat changes how snugly you can secure the five-point harness in your child's car seat:



1. Put the coat on your child, sit them in the car seat and fasten the harness. Tighten the harness until you can no longer pinch any of the webbing with your thumb and forefinger.
2. Without loosening the harness at all, unhook it and remove your child from the car seat. Take the coat off, put your child back in the car seat, and buckle the harness straps (which should be adjusted just as they were when the child was wearing the coat).
3. If you can pinch the webbing between your thumb and forefinger now, the coat is too bulky to be worn under the harness.

If you find your child's coat can't be safely worn under the harness, here are a

couple of things you can do:

- For smaller children, put a blanket over them to keep them warm. Only use aftermarket covers, essentially fitted blankets, designed to give additional warmth that are approved by the car seat manufacturer for your specific model. Such covers have been tested with the seat and won't compromise your child's safety.
- For a bigger child, after securing them in the car seat, turn the coat around and put it on backward (with arms through the armholes), so the back of the coat serves as a blanket resting on top of the harness.

\*Information from Consumer Reports 'The Dangers of Winter Coats and Car Seats' 11/25/2023

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## Oral Health - A Song to Make You Smile!

Here is a fun, festive way to reinforce good oral health habits with your child.

### Sing to the tune of "Jingle Bells"

I brush my teeth, I brush my teeth, every day and night  
I brush them, floss them rinse them clean to keep them nice and bright  
I brush them once, I brush them twice I brush them till they shine  
I always brush them round and round, those healthy teeth of mine

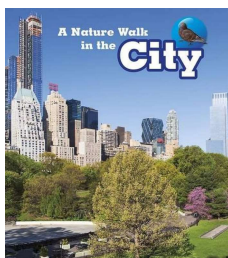
I eat good foods, I eat good foods, to give my teeth a treat  
I like to eat healthy foods like veggies fruit and meat  
If I eat sweets, if I eat sweets, I brush or rinse away  
To keep my teeth shiny bright and free from tooth decay

This song idea is compliments of Kids Smiles: [www.kidssmiles.org/](http://www.kidssmiles.org/)

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## Family Engagement

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### Take a Walk!

Every walk is an opportunity for children to learn about the natural world. Walk around the block with your child as there is always something new to explore. While you walk around your neighborhood, yard, patio:

- Be open to the wonder of noticing small details and new growth.
- Leave electronic toys behind so children can focus on the world around them.
- Bring paper and crayons so children can draw what they see.
- Walk at different times of the day to increase your chances of seeing something new.
- Ask, "What's different about what you see today?" each time you and your child walk outside.
- Play "I spy with my little eye" from your window and help children learn to give clues about what they see.
- Model using all five senses. You might say, "I'm seeing the big clouds," "I'm touching the wet grass," "I'm hearing the jets of an airplane," or "I'm smelling the fallen pine tree needles." It's not safe to taste many things outdoors, but you can "taste" the air.

- Carry along an inexpensive magnifying glass so children can get up close and personal with nature.

Going on a walk and deliberately noticing things encourages children to observe with all their senses. A nature walk can help your child learn to focus their attention and take in the details of things around them.

#### **Suggested Books:**

- *Winter Trees* by Carole Gerber
- *Going on a Nature Hunt A Seek and Find Book: Toddler Nature Book* by *Busy Hands Books*
- *A Nature Walk in the City (Read and Learn: Nature Walks)* by Louise Spilsbury

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**Visit ELRC Region 11**

Community Services for Children | [elrc11@cscinc.org](mailto:elrc11@cscinc.org) | [www.cscinc.org](http://www.cscinc.org)

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