



Community Services for Children

Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12 February 2024

Serving Carbon, Lackawanna, Monroe, Pike, Wayne and Susquehanna counties

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Region 12 News

Free Tax Prep

The United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties are once again offering the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program to prepare local, state and federal income tax returns for FREE! To qualify for this service, households must have had an income under \$60,000 in 2023. Appointments can be made online by visiting www.uwlc.net or by calling 2-1-1. Click [here](#) to see upcoming dates and locations.



Child Care Works Reminders

Communication with your ELRC Provider Specialist is critical in maintaining childcare as needed. Remember to report:

- When your child(ren) will be absent from care for 5 or more consecutive days
- If you wish to request a voluntary withdrawal from the ELRC program
- If you wish to transfer your child(ren) to a different childcare program

You may choose a new provider at any time. However, you must inform the ELRC and the ELRC must issue a new authorization before your child can begin care with the new provider. The ELRC will authorize the transfer and continue to help pay for your child care after the transfer if:

- your family copayments are up-to-date

- you continue to be eligible for the ELRC's help in paying for your child care
- the new provider that you choose meets the requirements of the Subsidized Child Care Program. The new provider must also agree to follow the Department of Human Services rules.

If the ELRC does not authorize the transfer, you will be responsible for paying the total cost of child care at the new provider.

40 Day Absence Policy

If your child is absent for more than 40 enrollment days between July 1 and June 30, you will be responsible to pay the childcare provider the daily rate for each day of absence beginning with the 41st absence. You must pay the provider's daily rate in addition to your weekly co-payment. For example, if your copayment is \$20/week and the daily rate is \$20, you must pay \$40 for the week that includes your child's 41st day of absence.

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:



Parenting Corner

We're Stuck Inside Because of the Weather... Now What?

This time of year can feel never-ending when the cold and gloomy weather makes it difficult to get outside. Keeping children actively engaged helps prevent them from going stir-crazy or becoming bored. Here's a few ideas to help them (and you!) make it through the cold months while having fun together!



- Build a fort with blankets and sheets
- Play Hide and Seek
- Have a tower building championship and you don't have to stick with blocks! What other objects can you find to stack tall?
- Try a new recipe
- Have a dance party
- Create an indoor obstacle course
- Make slime! Click [here](#) for a recipe
- Create a scavenger hunt
- Build a sensory bin for your toddler. What is a sensory bin? Click [here](#) for ideas.
- Get some fresh air! It doesn't have to be for long. Get bundled up and spend a few minutes outdoors, jumping in the puddles or building a snow

man!

For additional ideas, visit <https://busytoddler.com/easy-activities-for-kids-stuck-at-home/>.

PA Maternal & Child Health Services Block Grant

Parents and caregivers are invited to participate in meetings to provide feedback regarding priorities for Title V programs. The Bureau of Family Health is hosting meetings across the state and want to hear from you!

Southeast PA

3/7/24

Community Center at Willow Grove GIANT

Northeast PA

3/14/24

The Woodlands Inn

Click here for the [flyer](#) and registration details.

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 Dr. Brown from the Children's Clinic at LVHN. Dr. Brown discusses promoting healthy sleep habits in young children. Click [here](#) to listen.



Child Development

Considerations for Finding Quality Childcare



As parents and guardians, we want to give our children every opportunity for a happy and healthy childhood. A foundation for future success can be attributed to selecting a quality childcare provider.

Whether you are a new family looking to establish care for the first time or a family that is looking to switch facilities, it is important to take some time to research the potential childcare program. A majority of that research can happen by scheduling a tour and coming prepared with questions or a checklist. ChildCare Aware of America has a checklist along with additional information to help families choose quality childcare. You can get a copy of the checklist by going to [Childcareaware.com](https://www.childcareaware.com). Some of the questions to ask when touring a program:

Infant Specific:

- How do staff track infant feedings?
- How is formula/breast milk stored in the classroom?
- How are babies put down to nap? (All infants should be placed on their back to sleep and have their own assigned crib)

Generalized for all ages:

- What qualifications/trainings do your teaching staff have?
- What items do I need to bring? (extra clothing, nap items, diapers, wipes, etc.)
- What is your illness policy? When can they return after illness?

Additionally, here are some items that you want to look for when touring a facility:

- Are there positive teacher-child interactions and respectful language?
- What is the overall condition of the facility and classroom materials?
- What is the building security/access like?

For more information on touring a facility, watch this quick video:

[Choosing Quality Childcare](#)

Resource & Referral



The Affordable Connectivity Program is a federal program designed to help families who may be struggling to afford internet service. Having a reliable internet service is extremely important in today's interconnected world. The

Coronavirus Pandemic has also shown us how important internet access can be to both school children and working adults.

In general, a household is eligible if the household income is at or below 200% Federal Poverty Income Guidelines, or if a member of the household is enrolled in an assistance program. Click [here](#) to for eligibility specifics and additional information on the program.

Two Steps to Enroll

1. Go to [AffordableConnectivity.gov](#) to submit an application or print out a mail-in application.
2. Contact your preferred participating provider to select a plan and have the discount applied to your bill. (Some providers may have an alternative application that they will ask you to complete.)

Eligible households must both apply for the program and contact a participating provider to select a service plan.

Health & Safety

American Heart Month

February is a busy month for kids. Valentine's Day and Dental Health month are recognized in February, but it is also American Heart Month. This is a great opportunity to talk about keeping our hearts healthy!



Encourage children at home to be physically active. You can set up a quick and easy obstacle course in the living room or at the local playground, run relay races, take a bike ride, or learn how to do jumping jacks.

You can also introduce the importance of sleep and quiet time for a healthy heart, including yoga for kids. Another fun family activity is to create and cook heart-healthy recipes together. Talk about foods that keep your heart strong and healthy. You might also want to pick up some books from your local library about heart health and spend some quality time together reading a new book.

There are many more ideas included in the links below.

- [Action for Healthy Kids](#)
- [Kids Yoga](#)
- [Heart Healthy Book Titles](#)

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

Choosing Healthy Drinks for Your Young Child

Choose drinks that will help keep your child healthy. Many drinks have natural or added sugar. Children who are often given sugary drinks are more likely to have tooth decay (cavities). You might not even know you are giving your child drinks with sugar! Water or milk are the best drinks for your child.



Tips for Choosing Healthy Drinks:

- Breast milk is best. Breastfeed your child for 6 months or longer.
- Give your child plain water with fluoride. Water from the tap (faucet) is safe and inexpensive.
- Give your child milk at scheduled meal and snack times.
- It is best not to put your child to bed with a bottle or sippy cup. If you do, the bottle or sippy cup should contain only water, nothing else.
- Give your child cut-up or whole fruit instead of fruit juice.
- If you give your child juice, wait until he is 6 months old. Offer your child no more than 4 to 6 ounces of 100-percent fruit juice each day. Serve juice in a cup.
- If your child drinks from a sippy cup, it should contain only water or milk, nothing else. By age 12 to 14 months, most children can drink from a cup.

For more information click [here](#).

Family Engagement

We are Learning in the Bedroom!

Learning happens everywhere, including when children are getting up in the morning and when they are going to bed at night. Here are some activities to help support your children's learning.

Activities for Infants: As you dress your baby, tell him what you are doing as you are doing it. Tell him, "The shirt goes over the head and one arm in and the other arm in the other sleeve, then cover your belly". (Social and Emotional Development)

Activities for Toddlers: Let your toddler pick out his clothes or at least one item. Ask him to identify where different items of clothing belong on his body. Do not forget things like mittens, hats and shoes. (Social and Emotional Development)

Activities for Preschoolers: Using index cards, as you move through your child's room, have them name items and help them write the name of the items on the cards. Place the cards next to the items. (Language and Literacy Development, Writing and Reading)

Activities for Kindergarteners: Before bedtime, ask your kindergartner to draw a picture of what they think they will dream about. Take the picture and post it in the room so they can see it and ask them to tell you a bedtime story about their picture. (Language and Literacy)

Suggested Books:

- In My Bedroom by Carol Thompson
- The Berenstain Bears and the Messy Room by Stan and Jan Berensta
- Good Night, Gorilla by Petty Rathmann

Resource: Learning is Everywhere: Activities to do with young children.

www.papromiseforchildren.com

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