



Community Services for Children Provider Link Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 14 April 2024

Serving Lehigh & Northampton counties

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Region 14 Updates

Easterseals - Make the First Five Count

Easterseals Make the First Five Count, is looking to collaborate with providers to offer **FREE** online access to the Ages and Stages Child Development and Social Emotional Questionnaires for children 0-5 years of age. With parent consent, families will be directed to the online screening tool.

Specialists from Easterseals follow up with families and teachers to share the screening results and provide strategies for child success.

For more information, click on the flyer below.

- [Easterseals - Make the First Five Count](#)

Region 14 Provider Supports

ELRC 14 Director's Network

Join us on April 9th at 1:00 pm for our next Director's Network Meeting. This month we will be discussing the CQI Grant Final Expense Reports and documentation. We will explain how to complete the final expense reports, discuss acceptable expenses, acceptable documentation, and strategies on how to keep financial records organized. Click below to register.

- [Directors Network - April 2024](#)

Quality Coach Office Days



Are you thinking about moving up in STARS and need some extra assistance? Do you need assistance with your Keystone STARS Renewal or Designation? Your Quality Coach is here to help! Quality Coaches are available to answer questions throughout the week and are in the office weekly to meet one on one to support you through your STARS journey.

- [Quality Coach Office Days](#)

Get to Know Keystone STARS!

Are you a STAR 1 Program? If so, please join the ELRC 14 for an informational webinar to learn about the basics of Keystone STARS. Keystone STARS is not the same as it was when it first started. Come and learn what Keystone STARS is today. We will share information on the STARS structure, benefits and incentives, STARS Performance Standards, the designation process, and how your Quality Coach can help you.

Don't miss the sessions we have coming in April. Both sessions are being offered via webinar so you don't have to leave your program.

April 24th at 12:30 - 1:30 pm

Or

April 24th at 7:00 - 8:00 pm

- [Get to Know Keystone STARS](#)

ELRC Updates



Continuous Quality Improvement Grant

Eligible STAR 2, 3 and 4 providers who applied for the Continuous Quality Improvement Grant, received their payment in March.

It is required that you account for the spending of these award dollars. Keep all receipts for eligible expenses, including payroll records to verify staff bonuses have been paid through payroll and taxes deducted appropriately. All expenses must have occurred from July 1, 2023 - May 8, 2024

Please read through the [ELRC Policy Communication](#) and [FAQ document](#) for full grant details and schedule a meeting with your Quality Coach to complete your Final Expense Report. Final Expense Reports are due to the ELRC no later than May 15, 2024.

Registration Fees

As of January 1st, 2023, certified child care providers receive a registration fee for all newly enrolled CCW children. This registration fee is automatically added to the provider invoice for the service period in which the enrollment was effective, regardless of whether the provider charges a registration fee.

Providers **cannot** charge CCW families an additional registration fee or the difference between the ELRC's registration fee and what the provider charges

private pay families for a registration fee. ***Charging CCW families a registration fee could result in termination of the provider agreement.***

Child Care Centers - \$75
Group Child Care Homes - \$50
Family Child Care Homes - \$50

Annual Registration Fees

The ELRC will pay an annual registration fee for your CCW enrolled children if your program charges an annual registration fee to your private pay families. This fee must be requested using this [form](#).

Please Note: the ELRC will not pay any other type of fee such as summer enrollment fees, school year registration fees, waitlist fees, field trip fees, etc.

Prior to authorizing these annual fees, the ELRC must receive a one-time verification of these charges. This may include a copy of your family handbook or family contract that states all families are charged an annual fee every year.

If you have any questions, you can click [here](#) to read OCDEL's Announcement ELRC 22-09 explaining this policy or reach out to your Provider Specialist.

Register Now! Directors Network - Finding and Retaining Staff for Child Care Providers



CSC's ELRC Region 16 is inviting you to attend their monthly Directors Network "Finding and Retaining Staff for Child Care Providers." This group will meet via Teams on April 17th from 1:00-3:00 pm.

Multiple breakout rooms will be offered to address the following topics:

1. Finding the Right Fit: Learn effective strategies and tools to identify and attract the right staff.
2. Onboarding New Hires: Get a plan for the first 90 days to ensure a successful transition.
3. Staff Retention Tactics: Explore innovative approaches to foster a positive workplace.
4. Representatives from Southeast Professional Development Organization (higher education enrollment and tuition assistance)
5. Representatives from Northeast Professional Development Organization (higher education enrollment and tuition assistance)

Please join us for an engaging session filled with expert advice, real-world examples, and collaborative discussions.

Click [here](#) to register

***Please note there has been a registration link change.**

**Certification Update:
Outside Service Providers**

Providers often have outside agencies or consultants visiting children during the day. This may include early intervention services, special music teachers, speech therapists, sports instructors or even guest readers. These services can add valuable experiences

for the children and bring enrichment to your program! However, there should be some thought to the amount of access that you allow to these guests.

- Therapists (Early Intervention, Intermediate Units, speech therapists, PT/OT, etc) who are supporting a child's IEP, IFSP must be allowed access to work with the child. Therapists are employed by outside agencies and have met clearance requirements through their employment. Providers may request, but cannot require, copies of these clearances.
- Schedule short intake meetings with the therapists, and families if possible, at the onset of services to set expectations around communication, scheduling, and goals for the child. Therapists are there to support an assigned child and should not be a distraction for the rest of the children in the class.
- It is encouraged that children remain in the classroom for services. However, if it is not possible for the therapist to deliver services in the classroom effectively, providers should reach out to their regional certification rep. for direction on how to proceed.
- Other visitors not associated with partner agencies, such as guest readers, may not have the required clearances and should never be left alone with children or counted in teacher:child ratio.
- Remember, partners and other visitors should never be counted in teacher/child ratio



Free Summer Lesson Plans!

Nearly 600 child care providers downloaded 5,202 free lesson plans last summer, saving already short-staffed teachers hundreds of hours in lesson planning and ensuring high-quality learning for 39,971 children statewide. Child care and youth-serving organizations can access **Best Day Ever!** at no cost again this summer with 11 weeks of all-new lesson plans for preschool and school-aged children.



The Learning Lamp developed Best Day Ever! to reduce the burden of staffing shortages and rising costs for child care programs. Lessons are easy to access, use readily available, affordable materials, and come aligned with PA Academic and Early Learning standards. The plans are offered in week-long themed units: 11 preschool and 11 school-age lesson plans are available now to summer programs in Pennsylvania at no cost. The lessons were written and tested by The Learning Lamp's own teachers. A leading provider of out-of-school time learning in south-central Pennsylvania, The Learning Lamp will share all Best Day Ever! units for FREE through August 2024

For more information about The Learning Lamp and its Best Day Ever! 2024 Free Summer Trial, call Kerri at 814-262-0732 ext. 245.

Every April, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) promotes the Week of the Young Child. This week celebrates the importance of high-quality early learning, and the critical role early childhood educators play in a child's development and learning.

The ELRC would love to see the creative ways you are engaging families, children and other partners in the WOYC activities. Send pictures and stories to your Quality Coach and with your permission, we will add some submissions to the Provider Link newsletter or social media.

It's not too late to take part in this fun week! Visit NAEYC's [website](#) for celebration themes and other resources.

PQAS Cohort

Have you considered applying for a PQAS certification? The Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System (PQAS) maintains a registry of approved Professional Development Instructors and Technical Assistance Consultants/Coaches to help ensure that professional development activities and technical assistance meet quality standards. Professionals who receive their PQAS certification can

- enter trainings on the PD Registry
- issue training hours to their own staff which are accepted by certification and Keystone STARS
- partner with the ELRC to deliver PAID trainings to other child care providers.

The ELRC is forming a FREE cohort of professionals interested in becoming PQAS certified to work together through the process. In order to be eligible for this cohort, candidates must:

- work as a childcare provider in ELRC Regions 11, 12, 13, 14 or 16
- be approved at a level C or above on the Career Pathway
- have experience training (formally or informally) others within the last 5 years

The cohort will run for 4 sessions on 4/18, 5/1, 5/16 & 5/30 from 1:00-1:45 pm. If you are interested in joining, please email estair@cscinc.org to join the registration list.



The Importance of Family Handbooks

The purpose of a family handbook is to share the policies and procedures of your program with the families that you serve. It's also an opportunity to share your program's strengths and to provide clear expectations so that families can determine if your program will be a good fit for their child.

Family handbooks should be reviewed at least annually and be revised whenever necessary. Requesting input from staff can also be helpful when updating your handbook. They may be aware of trends or concerns that could be addressed with updated policies. If your handbook has been created electronically it can easily be updated and sent out to your families.

Your family handbook is a reflection of your business, your educational philosophy and your daily policies and procedures. It provides clear communication between families, staff and the director and should be updated as needed. If you are looking for a sample handbook or want to know what policies should be included in your handbook, contact your Quality Coach who will provide a variety of samples and resources.

Childcare Liability Insurance Survey



The Voice of ECE has announced the launch of a Childcare Liability Insurance Survey created by and for early childhood business owners. The survey is open now and closes on April 12, 2024. To access the survey, please [visit this link](#).

The primary objective of this survey is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences childcare business owners have had with liability insurance carriers. They are particularly interested in gathering information on changes in premiums, coverage issues, or policy cancellations/non-renewals. Your feedback will play a crucial role in identifying areas for improvement, ultimately ensuring that childcare facilities are adequately protected.

Your time investment is greatly appreciated and as a bonus, two participants will be chosen randomly to win a \$100 gift card, thanks to the generosity of PennAEYC.

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.

Please consider sharing these podcasts with the families in your program!

This month, we are joined by Susan Lettera, former Director of Lehigh County Integrated Services. Susan shares her expertise regarding family group decision making. Families know best what their children need and can work with a coordinator to assist in decision making process. Click [here](#) to listen.

PARENT PROJECT PODCAST



Health & Safety

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month recognizes the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect. Prevention services and supports developed by this collaboration can help parents, other caregivers, and communities protect children and strengthen families.

For the month of April, we encourage you to promote child abuse prevention awareness with your networks.

- Use #ChildAbusePreventionMonth in your social media posts
- Wear Blue on Friday, April 19th to show your support of Child Abuse Prevention
- Share this website with families enrolled in your program. There are lots of great articles and videos to support parents facing the challenges of parenting. **Discipline Tips for Toddlers, Kids, Teens & Tweens - GetParentingTips.com**
- Host a refresher of PA Mandated Reporter training for your teachers during your April staff meeting.



Want to add staff or other members of your team to this newsletter? Email estair@cscinc.org and specify which Regional Newsletter you would like. Requests will be added to next month's distribution.

[Visit ELRC Region 14](#)

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Connect with us



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