Community Services for Children

Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 11 July 2024

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

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Region 11 News

Wyoming County Summer Play Group

HANDS of Wyoming County is offering a Summer Play Group for 2-6 year olds every Tuesday in July. The children learn through play as the parents have the opportunity to talk with one another. Please see attached flyer for location and time.

Hazleton Area Children's Festival

Hazleton POWER is hosting a festival at the Hazle Township Community Park located at 37 Pecora Boulevard in Hazleton on Sunday, August 25th from 11:00am-6:00pm.

This fun family event will have activities for children as well as local businesses that serve and benefit the youth in the Greater Hazleton Area. Many FREE activities, food vendors, craft vendors, tricky trays, touch a truck and SO MUCH MORE! The Early Learning Resource Center will be participating in this event and we look forward to seeing you there!

Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Back to School Event

Come on out to this event on Friday, August 23 rd from 10:00am-1:00pm at The Hazleton Academy. The event will have free health screenings for children, free food for children up to 5 years old and free backpacks for children between the ages of 3-5 years. Region 11's ELRC staff look forward to seeing you at this event!

Food and Fun in the Park

Attention all children from kindergarten through 12 th grade! Have fun, keep learning, stay active and enjoy free lunches and snacks all summer long. Fun in the park is every Monday through Friday from 10:00am-2:00pm from June 24th to August 16th at various park locations. Please see the attached flyer for the location nearest you.

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:

ECEhire.com
a PHMC program

Parenting Corner

Choosing Quality Childcare: Understanding the Keystone STARS Program

Finding the right childcare for your child(ren) can be a challenging task. It's not just about finding a convenient location or affordable rates; overall quality matters immensely. Fortunately, programs like Keystone STARS are here to help guide parents in making informed decisions about their childcare options.

What is Keystone STARS?
Keystone STARS is Pennsylvania's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for early learning programs. It's designed to recognize, support, and promote quality improvement in early learning and development programs. STARS offers four levels of quality rating standards, each building upon the previous one: STAR 1, STAR 2, STAR 3, and STAR 4.

One of the significant advantages of the Keystone STARS program is its correlation between quality and the number of stars awarded to a childcare facility. The higher the STAR level, the more evidence there is of quality care and educational programming. Here's how the STARS break down:

- **STAR 1: Basic health and safety requirements are met.**
- **STAR 2: Enhanced health and safety practices, as well as a commitment to professional development for staff.**
- **STAR 3: High-quality early learning experiences and environments that support children's growth and development.**
- **STAR 4: Exceptional early learning programs that exceed state licensing requirements.**

By understanding the Keystone STARS program and it's connection with quality childcare, parents can make more informed decisions when selecting early learning environments for their children. Remember, investing in quality childcare today lays the foundation for your child's bright future tomorrow.

For more information you can visit: **https://raiseyourstar.org/** to learn more about the ELRC and STARS program.

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 Kellie Cathey, licensed social worker, who discusses children's mental health and how parents can support their child's well-being. Click **here** to listen.

Child Development

Choosing Extracurricular Activities for Children

Children have many opportunities for participation in outside activities like sports teams, music lessons, art clubs and other activities that can align with their passions! When choosing an extracurricular activity, consider some of these tips:

Developmental Stage: Consider your child's age and developmental stage. Young children may benefit from activities that focus on basic skills and social interaction, while older children might thrive in more specialized or challenging pursuits.

Time Commitment: Evaluate the time commitment required for each activity. Ensure it fits into your family's schedule without overwhelming your child or conflicting with other priorities like schoolwork or family time.

Social Interaction: Look for activities that promote social interaction and teamwork. These skills are crucial for children's social development and learning to work with others.

Skill Development: Choose activities that help develop a variety of skills. For example, sports can build physical fitness, teamwork, and resilience, while music lessons can enhance creativity, discipline, and focus.

Try Before Committing: Many activities offer trial sessions or introductory classes. Encourage your child to try different activities before committing long-term to see what they enjoy and excel in.

Parental Support: Consider your own ability to support your child in their chosen

activities. Some activities may require financial investment, transportation, or parental involvement, so choose activities that are feasible for your family.
Monitor Enjoyment: Regularly check in with your child to see how they feel about their activities. If they're no longer enjoying an activity or seem stressed, consider adjusting or exploring different options.

By considering these factors, you can choose extracurricular activities that support your child's growth, interests, and overall well-being. For more information go to www.childmind.org.

Resource & Referral

Suspension & Expulsion Parent Survey

PennAEYC is working on a study exploring suspension and expulsion practices and is looking to talk with families who have experienced suspension or expulsion. This could mean several things - a child that was asked to leave a child care program, a child who was not invited back to a program, a child for whom conditions were placed on their return, or a child whose family felt like they had no choice but to remove their child from a program.

A $50 Visa gift card is available to qualifying families who fill out the survey. Eligible families who choose to participate in a focus group will receive a $125 Visa gift card.

Parents or caregivers can access this survey online and afterwards they will be contacted about joining a focus group.

Please share this message with families who you think would be interested and qualify - perhaps families who were asked to leave a different program and ended up with your child care program. Families can access the survey by clicking **here.**

Join the Summer Learning and Literacy Road Trip!

On June 22, 2024, the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) kicks off the second annual 8-week virtual Summer Learning and Literacy Road Trip. Throughout the summer families, teachers, and early childhood education partners are invited to follow along and discover activities and resources to support early learning and literacy.

Through the virtual road trip, parents/care takers can get information about Pennsylvania libraries and State Parks with fun resources, activities to do with children, and book recommendations to support early literacy and language. All activities align with the PA Early Learning Standards and can be done anywhere.

The resources for 2024 include:

- Summer Literacy and Learning Road Trip Map: Use the map (available in

English or Spanish) to follow along with the Summer Learning and Literacy Road Trip. Print the map and your child can follow along on the Road Trip.

- My Summer Learning and Literacy Road Trip Travel Journal: *My Summer Learning and Literacy Road Trip Travel Journal* (available in English or Spanish) is a great way to help your child explore books and fun activities. Each week, discover something new with your child, then help them complete their Travel Journal. With a child, identify three favorite books they read and favorite things they've done during the week. Each week, learn about a different library, get book recommendations, and find fun activities to do at a Pennsylvania State Park.

Health & Safety

July is Mental Health Awareness Month

At different stages of development, the factors that support good mental health for children can change. Fostering good mental health starts from birth. The first step to creating good health and wellbeing in childhood is to ensure your child's essential needs are met. On top of the basics like hydration, a healthy diet and appropriate clothes, strategies to support a child's mental health include allowing time and space to play, opportunities for exercise, and socializing.

The relationship between you and your child forms the basis of good mental health for life. A positive, trusting, and secure bond between you and your child is important to build a character strong enough to survive life's highs and lows. Holding and cuddling your baby is the first step on your child's journey to good mental health. When you hold your child, their body and yours release powerful hormones, which encourage bonding and feelings of safety and security, all-important foundations for good self-esteem in later life. When they are older, hugs and smiles can go a long way.

Giving your child lots of praise and attention is important for future emotional well-being. Let them know that you love them no matter what happens. Even if they do not understand your words, they will respond to your positive tone, body language, and attitude. Set aside some time every day to have a chat with your child to catch up on everything happening in their lives. Talk about feelings too to help your child learn to recognize and manage their emotions early in life.

For more information: *https://insights.gostudent.org/en/mental-health-definition-for-kids#nurture-mental-health*

Getting Oral Health Care During Pregnancy

Taking care of your mouth while you are pregnant is important for you and your baby. Getting oral health care, including cleanings, X-rays, fillings, and pain medication, is

safe when you are pregnant.

Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, drinking water throughout the day and eating nutritious foods will help keep you and your baby healthy.

Tips for getting oral health care:

- If your last dental visit was more than six months ago or if you have an oral health problem or concern, make an appointment as soon as possible.
- Getting oral health care during the second trimester is best. During the first trimester, you might have morning sickness. During the third trimester, it can be uncomfortable to lie on your back in the dental chair.
- Tell the dental clinic staff that you are pregnant and your due date. This information will help them provide the best care and keep you comfortable.
- Tell the staff about any changes in your teeth or gums. Also, tell them about all medications, including vitamin and mineral supplements, that you are taking.

Water Beads

Did you know that water beads are associated with thousands of emergency-department visits every year? Water beads, often sold as toys, in craft kits, as sensory tools, are small, water-absorbing, often colorful balls of super absorbent polymer and can grow 100 times their original size when exposed to water. Water beads should not be used by child care providers.

Water beads can be deadly to babies and small children if ingested, and can lead to choking, internal injuries and even death if left undetected. Water beads inserted into ears can damage ear structures, causing hearing loss and require surgery. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) urges parents and caregivers to remove these products from any environment with children. If you suspect a child has swallowed a water bead or inserted a water bead into their ear or nose, seek medical treatment right away.

For more information on water beads, visit:

- Water Beads | CPSC.org
- Water Beads: Harmful if Swallowed, Put in Ears | HealthyChildren.org
- Are Water Beads Dangerous? | Poison Control

Family Engagement

Summer Reading Ideas Fun Ideas for Children and Parents

One of the biggest concerns with your child at home for summer vacation is the amount of literacy skills that can be lost. Reading can help maintain those

skills and entertain your child for hours.

Tips for Summer Reading for Kids:

- Make it fun, let's choose books that they are interested in
- Set a good example by reading yourself.
- Make reading a daily habit.
- Talk about what you are reading .
- Attend story time at the library or bookstore.
- Go on field trips to museums, zoos, and other places that encourage reading.
- Play games that involve reading, such as charades or bingo.
- Make a reading nook in your home.
- Reward kids for reading, such as with stickers, badges, or small prizes.
- Do not force kids to read if they do not want to.
- Be patient and encouraging.
- Remember that summer is a time for fun and relaxation, so do not put too much pressure on kids to read.

Links to Summer Book Lists for Children:

- ***Summer***
- ***Ice Cream***
- ***Water & Swimming***
- ***Ocean***
- ***Sharks***
- ***STEM***

Visit ELRC Region 11

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Connect with us

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