Community Services for Children

Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 11 March 2025

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

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Region 11 News

New ELRC Office Open in Bloomsburg

Community Services for Children is excited to announce the official opening of our new, secondary office space in Bloomsburg. The new office is located at

Mulberry Mills Complex
The HUB
160 W. 6th St
Bloomsburg

The office in open daily from 8:30am-5:00pm for walk-ins and appointments. Please call our main number (570) 704-5333 with questions or to schedule an appointment in our new office.

Children Denied Care

If your child is denied care at your child care program, please notify your ELRC Family Specialist. This could be due to a behavioral concern or facility issue like a plumbing or heating problem, a staff shortage, or other unforeseen circumstance. While child care providers are making sure the environment is safe for your child and staffed

appropriately, the ELRC needs to know when care is denied.

Also, please seek the support of your Family Specialist if your child in suspended or expelled due to challenging behaviors as they may be able to connect you with other resources in your area.

FREE Kids' Dental Day

Luzerne County Community College is hosting a free dental day for kids on Saturday, April 5, 2025. Along with $300 worth of free dental services for children, there will be fun dental stations, dental characters and prizes. Click on the flyer below for more information on days and times.

- LCCC Dental Clinic

Live Virtual PA One Book Kick-Off

Mark your calendar for April 10th at 10:30 am, for th e live virtual kick-off of the 2025 PA One Book, *"Arlo Draws an Octopus"*. Join the conversation with the author and the illustrator! Visit the PA One Book website for fun learning activities to explore with your children and for the link to the event.

New Bloomsburg Food Pantry!

We are excited to announce a new food pantry at our Bloomsburg office. Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. helps people access nutritious foods through food pantries, home-delivered meals, and assistance with SNAP applications. CSO has a food pantry at the HUB at Mulberry Mills located at 160 W. 6th St, Bloomsburg. Please visit www.csocares.org/food for more information and for days and hours of operation.

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

Rapid Response Team

Rapid Response Team is a short-term intervention designed to support children who may be experiencing challenging behaviors in the early learning setting. This team observes the child at the child care facility and will offer strategies to the teacher and parent. If appropriate, referrals to community resources and services are shared with the family and provider as well.

RAPID
RESPONSE TEAM

If you have concerns that your child may be suspended or expelled from child care and could benefit from the Rapid Response Team supports, you can begin the referral process here: ***RRT Referral***
(This program does require parental and provider consent)

Preparing Your Child for Kindergarten: A Guide for Parents

Kindergarten registration has begun in many communities. Starting Kindergarten is an exciting milestone for both children and their parents. For many little ones, it marks the beginning of a new chapter full of learning, exploration, and growth. Preparing for this process plays a crucial role in ensuring that your child feels confident and excited as they step into the school setting for the first time. Here's how you can help your children prepare for kindergarten:

1. Establish a Routine - Start by practicing a consistent daily schedule, including wake-up times, meals, and bedtime. A predictable routine will help with adjusting to the structure of school life.

2. Build Social Skills - Encourage sharing, taking turns, and playing with others. Playdates or group activities are great ways to help your child feel comfortable interacting with peers.

3. Encourage Independence - Help your child become more independent by letting them practice small tasks, like dressing themselves, packing their own backpack, or eating on their own. This builds confidence and self-reliance.

4. Practice Basic Academic Skills - Review basic concepts like colors, shapes, numbers, and letters. Make learning fun through games, books, and everyday activities to create a love for learning.

5. Talk about Kindergarten Positively - Discuss the exciting things your child will do, like meeting new friends and playing games. Address any worries by reassuring them and explaining what to expect.

6. Focus on Emotional Resilience - Kindergarten can be an emotional journey. Encourage your child to express their feelings and help them navigate challenges with a positive attitude.

7. Read Together - Reading regularly strengthens literacy skills and fosters curiosity. Ask questions about the stories to encourage comprehension and communication.

8. Teach Safety and Hygiene - Show your child the importance of washing hands, covering coughs, and following simple safety rules. These skills help them feel more prepared for school.

The transition to Kindergarten is a big step, but with the right preparation, your child can approach it with excitement and confidence. By focusing on these tips above, you'll help set your child up for a successful and joyful start to their school journey. Keep the lines of communication open and be there to offer support as your little one begins this exciting new chapter.

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

Children and Digital Media

Digital media is part of our world today. The benefits, if used moderately and appropriately, can be great. But research has shown that face-to-face time with family and friends plays an even more important role in promoting children's learning and healthy development.

Here are some new tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help you as you manage your children's use of digital media at home.

- Set limits; kids need and expect them. Tech use should have reasonable limits. Unstructured and offline play stimulates creativity. Make unplugged playtime a daily priority.
- Families who play together, learn together. Family participation is also great for media activities—it encourages social interactions, bonding, and learning.
- Be a good role model. Because children are great mimics, limit your own media use.
- Know the value of face-to-face communication. Very young children learn best through two-way communication. Research has shown that it's that "back-and-forth conversation" that improves language skills—much more so than "passive" listening or one-way interaction with a screen.
- Create tech-free zones. Keep family mealtimes tech-free. Recharge devices outside bedrooms to help children avoid the temptation to use them when they should be sleeping.
- Don't use technology as an emotional pacifier. Media can be effective in keeping kids calm and quiet, but it should not be the only way they learn to calm down. Children need to be taught how to identify and handle

strong emotions and come up with activities to manage boredom.
- Apps for kids – do your homework. More than 80,000 apps are labeled as educational, but little research has demonstrated their actual quality. Look to organizations like Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org) for reviews about age-appropriate apps.

These tips have been adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics Children and Media - Tips for Parents.

Resource & Referral

Keystone Scholars

A baby with a higher education savings account at birth is three times more likely to pursue education or training after high school and four times more likely to graduate! Pennsylvania is making it easy for families to start a PA529 educational savings account by starting that account with a $100 deposit for all babies born or adopted after January 2019.

Please check out this **flyer** for more information and register your child at **www.pa529.com/keystone.**

Free Tax Services

The **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** program offers free tax help to people who make $60,000 or less, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their tax returns. Families can usually find VITA sites in community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. Many VITA sites offer virtual or “drop-off” tax return preparation. To locate an open site near you, use the **VITA Locator Tool**, **GetYourRefund.org**, or call (toll-free) 800-906-9887.

In addition, the **IRS Free File** offers many online resources and tax help. Find tax forms, instructions and publications, online payment options, and more. Individuals can even prepare and file their federal income tax online, free.

Health & Safety

ECELS Health & Safety Newsletter

Early Childhood Education Linkage System (ECELS) publishes a monthly newsletter full of valuable health & safety tips and resources for

children and families.

Click **here** to download the most recent newsletter.

Car Seat Safety

We know that it is important for children to ride in car seats, but there is so much more to car seat safety than just finding a car seat and buckling them in. It is important to find the correct car seat for your child's height and weight and ensure that it is properly installed.

The first step is to find the right car seat for your child (rear-facing, forward-facing or booster). The type of car seat needed is based on your child's age and size. Read the car seat manual in depth and follow the steps to install it correctly. If you are unsure if it is installed correctly, you can reach out to a local inspection station to have it verified.

According to the **CDC**, rear-facing car seats are for children birth through 2-4 years old. They should remain rear facing until they reach the maximum weight and height limit of their car seat. Forward-facing car seats are for children that outgrow their rear-facing car seat until at least 5 years old. Once they outgrow the forward-facing car seat, they are able to move to a booster, and then using a standard seat belt, which typically occurs around 9-12 years old.

Finally, make sure to register your car seat and sign-up for recall notices so you will be made aware of any safety updates.

For more information, including assistance finding an inspection station near you, visit **https://www.nhtsa.gov/vehicle-safety/car-seats-and-booster-seats**.

Setting Oral Health Goals

Why is setting goals important? Goal setting can help you create new behaviors. It can also allow you to measure your progress. Finally, it can give you the motivation to maintain healthy oral health habits.

Healthy oral health habits include:

- Regular dental visits and treatment
- Healthy snacks
- Brush with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day
- No sugary beverages
- No bottle for bed
- Water or milk only in sippy cups
- Drink tap water

- Avoid or limit junk food and candy
- Limit sugar and consider sugar substitutes
- Last thing to touch teeth before bed is toothbrush with fluorinated toothpaste

Click here for an infographic to help you set and meet healthy oral health goals.

Family Engagement

Spring Gardening

Planting a small garden with your child is a great activity to do during the spring. Early bloomers such as daffodils, tulips, and pansies will produce beautiful plants and get children excited to grow more.

Gardening with your child has many benefits.
Some of those benefits include exercise, spatial skills, math skills, character development, and holistic development. Gardening also fosters a sense of responsibility and patience, as children learn to care for their plants and wait for them to grow. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for quality bonding time and encourages a love for nature and the environment.

Check out Gardening With Kids for additional tips and how to create a garden and even how to create a garden in containers if you don't have a yard to use.

Visit ELRC Region 11

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