



Community Services for Children Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12 March 2025

Serving Susquehanna, Wayne, Lackawanna, Pike, Monroe & Carbon Counties

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Region 12 News

Make the First Five Count

Here is a great resource for parents and caregivers of young children! Make the First Five Count is Easterseals, Eastern PA's FREE online access to Ages and Stages Child Development (ASQ-3) and Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE-2) Questionnaires for children 0-5 years old.



If your family qualifies, Easterseals can provide guidance, strategies, and education using the results of the screenings. Easterseals Eastern PA serves children in Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Pike and Schuylkill Counties. See this [flyer](#) for more information.

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.

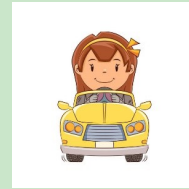


Also, please seek the support of your Family Specialist if your child in suspended

or expelled due to challenging behaviors as they may be able to connect you with other resources in your area.

Mobile Community Days

ELRC staff are out in the community to meet with families at our mobile site locations. The mobile sites allow families to meet with family specialists in locations that may be more convenient for them.



Please stop by to obtain information on the Child Care Works program, pick up/drop off applications, or to receive assistance in finding resources in your local community. Please see attached for upcoming dates and locations.

- [Mobile Community Days](#)
-

Lead Screenings

FREE Blood Lead Screening is available for children between 1 and 6 years old. The PA Department of Health in Lackawanna County is providing this service through July 2025. An appointment is needed to complete your child's screening.

- [Blood Screening information](#)
-

Family to Family Virtual Classes

NAMI is offering classes to help educate family, partners, and friends of people living with mental health conditions. The sessions provide an opportunity to learn skills and develop a supportive community in a safe space. Virtual classes take place on Tuesdays through April 8th, from 7pm-9pm.



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

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.



*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.

DID YOU KNOW?

Children who read succeed!
They are better behaved, have better school attendance, feel more confident and capable in school.

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.

PARENT PROJECT PODCAST



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>.

STAYING HEALTHY DURING THE SPRING SEASON

for Families

Spring is the perfect time to plant a garden. Healthy eating, physical activity, science skills, fine motor skills, and more—the benefits to growing a garden are numerous! ([Nat'l. Macaroni Kids](#))



Use the natural world as a learning tool to improve outcomes for young children and create time and space for nature play in your child's learning environment. ([Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center](#))



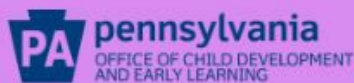
Knowing how to dress children for outdoor play in any weather can make a huge difference to the amount of time they're happy to spend outside. Make sure children have the clothing they need to stay dry and comfortable during the cool and wet spring season.

([Take Them Outside](#))



Spring is in the air and so are outdoor allergens! Avoid high exposure to pollen, keep your home and car clean of pollen, clean off outdoor pollen residues, know your allergies, and talk with your doctor if seasonal allergy symptoms appear.

([Seasonal Allergies at a Glance | NCCIH](#))



Make every bite count with in-season fruit and vegetables during meals and snacks! Eating seasonal produce is better for your health, tastes better, saves money and is good for the environment. Discover what produce is in season during the spring. ([USDA](#))



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 12

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Connect with us



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