



## Community Services for Children

# Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12 May 2025

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

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## Region 12 News

### NEW Federal Poverty Income Guidelines

The new Federal Poverty Income Guidelines for 2025 have been released and went into effect on May 5, 2025. Based on the new guidelines, families may experience no change, a decrease, or increase in their weekly co-payment charge based on your family size and income. Families with a decrease in co-pay should have received a confirmation notice in the mail detailing the new co-pay amount. Families with an increase in co-pay will see this co-pay change in your upcoming re-determination. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your family specialist for further assistance.



### Free Bowling

Did you know kids can bowl for FREE all summer! Click [here](#) to find participating bowling alleys near you and register.



### Matrix Behavior Solutions

Matrix Behavior Solutions are currently enrolling for their Center-Based Summer Programs for ages 3-18 years old. They have 5 convenient locations in East

Stroudsburg, Milford, Lehighton, Pottsville and Northampton. They accept most insurances. Call today for availability!

- [Matrix Behavior Solutions](#)

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## 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 click [here](#) for upcoming dates and locations. We look forward to see you there!

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## Blood 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](#)

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## United Baptist Church of Taylor

United Baptist Church of Taylor invites everyone to join them the last Wednesday of every month beginning May 28, 2025 from 4pm to 6pm for their Stop By- Grab a Quick Friendly Family Meal & Fellowship. This event is FREE. Just be sure to RSVP the week prior to the Wednesday you attend.

- [Family Friendly Meal Flyer](#)

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## 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:



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## Parenting Corner

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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 childcare 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.



*If you have concerns that your child may be suspended or expelled from childcare 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)*

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## The Transition from Child Care to Self-Care

Most childcare facilities care for children up to 12 years old, which leaves many to wonder - 'what's next?' As your child approaches that age, it is important to determine if they are ready to stay home alone before and after school or if there is a need to look into other care options until they are ready to handle that responsibility.



Here are a few things to consider:

- Will your child come straight home after school?
- Will your child be lonely or frightened home alone?
- Can your child manage simple jobs, like fixing a snack?
- Is your child prepared to handle an accident or an emergency?
- Is your neighborhood safe?
- Is there someone nearby that can be on call in case of an emergency?
- Does your child follow family rules and directions well?

If you determine that your child is not ready to stay home alone, a few options to consider include looking to neighbors or family members for support, hiring a babysitter, and looking into activities that occur at the school that they can take part in until they can be picked up.

For additional information and resources, visit [Child Care Aware](#) and [Healthy Children](#)

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## DID YOU KNOW?

In the first year, babies hear all the sounds needed to speak their native language. The more books read to them during the first year, the better they will be able to talk.

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### 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 Krystal Perez from the Allentown School District. She is the assistant director of health services, and she shares information on childhood obesity. Click [here](#) to listen.

# PARENT PROJECT PODCAST



## Child Development



### Helping Your Child Blossom: Tips to Boost Language Skills at Home

Language is at the heart of your child's learning and development. Strong language skills support success in reading, writing, social interactions, and even problem-solving. Fortunately, fostering language growth doesn't require special training—just a little time, attention, and creativity.

Here are five simple and effective ways you can help your child improve their language skills at home:

- **Talk with Them—Not Just to Them**

Engage in real conversations. Ask open-ended questions like “What was your favorite part of today?” or “How do you think that story ended?” This encourages your child to think and respond in complete thoughts, rather than one-word answers.

- **Read Together Every Day**

Reading aloud, even for just 10-15 minutes a day, builds vocabulary, comprehension, and a love of language. Choose a variety of books—fiction, nonfiction, poems, even comics—and talk about the stories as you go.

- **Make Storytelling a Daily Habit**

Encourage your child to tell you about their day, make up stories, or describe pictures. This helps them practice organizing their thoughts and using descriptive language. You can even take turns making up silly stories together.

- **Sing Songs and Recite Rhymes**

Music and rhythm make words memorable! Singing nursery rhymes, alphabet songs, or even catchy jingles helps children hear patterns in language and expands their vocabulary in a fun, relaxed way.

- **Limit Screen Time—Talk Instead**

Too much passive screen time can reduce the opportunity for meaningful conversation. Choose programs you can watch together and discuss, or better yet, replace some screen time with talking, playing, or reading. Remember: Your voice is your child’s most powerful teacher. Every chat at the dinner table, every bedtime story, and every silly rhyme you sing together is helps build a strong foundation for your child’s future learning.

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## Resource & Referral

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Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidence-based, early childhood family support, and parent education program designed to help parents and caregivers become their child’s first and most influential teachers.



The mission of Parents as Teachers is to provide information, support, and encouragement to parents during the critical early years of their child’s life to help ensure they are prepared for school and beyond.

Parents as Teachers is proven to:

- Increase parent knowledge of early learning development
- Improve early detection of developmental delays and health issues
- Increase children’s school readiness and success
- Prevent child abuse and neglect

Parents as Teachers builds strong communities, thriving families, and children who are healthy, safe, and learning!

Follow the link to find a Parent as Teacher program in your area.

<https://parentsasteachers.org/program-locator/>

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### Keystone Scholars

All children born to or adopted by PA residents automatically have a Keystone Scholars account in their name with \$100 for postsecondary education expenses. Parents can activate their child’s account at [www.pa529.com/keystone](http://www.pa529.com/keystone) or QR code.



# Keystone Scholars

## 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.

### May is Mental Health Month

Supporting young children's mental health is crucial for their development and well-being. Here are some tips to help nurture their emotional and mental health:

#### 1. Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

- Ensure the child feels safe and loved at home. A stable and nurturing environment helps children develop emotional resilience.
- Keep routines predictable. Consistency helps children feel secure.

#### 2. Teach Emotional Awareness

- Help children label their emotions ("I feel sad," "I'm frustrated") so they can begin to understand and manage them.
- Use books, songs, or stories to discuss emotions in a way that resonates with them.

#### 3. Be a Positive Role Model

- Model healthy emotional expression. When you experience emotions, talk about them and demonstrate ways to cope (deep breathing, taking a break).
- Show empathy and kindness, teaching them how to handle social situations respectfully.

#### 5. Encourage Physical Activity and Play

- Physical play helps children release pent-up energy and promotes overall well-being.
- Encourage outdoor activities, sports, or free play to foster creativity and reduce stress.

#### 6. Help Develop Coping Skills

- Teach children ways to cope with challenges and frustration (taking deep breaths, counting to ten, asking for help).

## 7. Ensure Healthy Sleep

- Establish a consistent bedtime routine. A good night's sleep is essential for emotional regulation and overall health.
- Limit screen time before bed and create a calm, quiet environment to promote restful sleep.

## 8. Seek Professional Help if Needed

- If you notice signs of prolonged anxiety, sadness, or behavioral changes, consider seeking advice from a mental health professional who specializes in children.

The key is to offer love, patience, and understanding while helping children develop tools to manage their emotions in healthy ways.

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## How Sugar Contributes to Tooth Decay

Children who frequently consume foods and drinks containing natural and/or added sugars during the day are more likely to develop tooth decay than those who consume them less often. You may not know that many of the foods and drinks you give child(ren) contain sugar.

Sugar plays a key role in tooth decay. Many foods, like milk and milk products, fruit, vegetables, grains, and processed and prepared foods, contain sugar. Bacteria that cause tooth decay break down foods and drinks that contain sugar to form acid. Each time a person consumes foods or drinks containing sugar, acid is in the mouth for 20 to 40 minutes. Children who are fed meals and snacks at scheduled times are at lower risk for developing tooth decay than children who are fed often during the day.

Many foods and drinks contain added sugar. Sugar in foods can be listed by many different names. The best place to check for sugar is in the ingredients list on the food label. Look for words like:

- Beet sugar
- Brown sugar
- Cane sugar
- Corn sweeteners
- Corn syrup
- Cane juice
- High fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Malt syrup
- Maple syrup
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- White sugar

To prevent tooth decay, it is best to have a schedule for serving meals and snacks to child(ren) instead of allowing them to graze throughout the day, especially when serving foods or drinks that have natural or added sugar.

**Ingredients: Whole Grain Oats (includes the oat bran), Sugar, Modified Corn Starch, Honey, Brown Sugar Syrup, Salt, Tripotassium Phosphate, Canola and/or Rice Bran Oil, Natural Almond Flavor. Vitamin E (mixed tocopherols) Added to Preserve Freshness.**

## Pennsylvania School Immunization Requirements

To attend school in Pennsylvania, children need to have received certain immunizations. Next school year might seem far away but now is a good time to start planning for any vaccinations your child will need. You can see the requirements [here](#).



Thank you to Child Development, Inc. for sharing this information.

## Family Engagement

### Scavenger Hunt Family Fun

Spring has sprung, making May the perfect time for families to get outside and spend quality time together. The warmer weather is perfect for nature walks. Visit a local park or trail and explore. To make it extra fun, make it a scavenger hunt by bringing a list of things to find like a yellow flower, a butterfly, or park animals. For older children the list can include different types of flowers and plants. Let's get excited for some May family fun!



For additional scavenger hunt ideas: [26 Scavenger Hunt Ideas for Kids \(2025\) - Parade](#)

*Adopted from: Creative Family Fun website*

Visit ELRC Region 12

Community Services for Children | [elrc12@cscinc.org](mailto:elrc12@cscinc.org) | [www.cscinc.org](http://www.cscinc.org)

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