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## Community Services for Children

### Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12

### November 2025

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

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## Region 12 News

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*Please note that the ELRC offices will be closed on Thursday, November 27th & Friday, November 28th for the Thanksgiving holiday.*



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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 see attached [flyer](#) for upcoming dates and locations. We look forward to seeing you there!

## Holiday Happenings



United Neighborhood Center of NEPA

Feed a Friend Registration is happening through November 21<sup>st</sup>.

Families with children aged 18 and under are eligible to register for a gift card to a local grocery store to buy their favorite traditional foods to celebrate Thanksgiving.

- Click [here](#) for the flyer.

## Salvation Army Angel Tree

Every child deserves to experience the joy of the holiday season. The Salvation Army Angel Tree program helps provide Christmas gifts for hundreds of thousands of children around the country each year. Once a child has been registered and accepted as an Angel, their Christmas wish list is shared with donors in the community who purchase gifts of new clothing and toys. The gifts are distributed to the family.

Please visit the Salvation Army's website at [SA Angel Tree](#) to apply for Christmas assistance.

## Essential Resources

Maternal and Family Health Circle of Care

Maternal and Family Health will be offering a **Free POP-UP Produce Market** at their Circle of Care Location.

November 20th 10:00 AM-until supplies last.  
820 S. Washington Ave  
Scranton, PA

The market is made available through a Weinberg Foundation Grant. Please see this [flyer](#) for more information.

## Facing Reduced Benefits or Income?

Many people in our community are facing unexpected gaps in income due to the government shutdown, delayed SNAP benefits, and job instability. This resource linked below shares practical steps to prioritize and to connect with critical resources.

- **Guide for Individuals Facing Reduced Benefits or Income**

## Need Help Paying for Child Care?

Pocono Mountain United Way (PMUW) can assist families of Monroe County with the cost of childcare through a one-time grant. The grant is paid directly to the childcare center and covers \$35 a week for 19- weeks.

See this [flyer](#) for the requirement/qualifications to be approved for this grant.

## SMILE: In-Home Mentoring

Pocono Mountain United Way's SMILE Program is a FREE program which connects families to an Early Childhood Professional who will visit with your child to

provide in-home education and support. This program is for children 3-6 years old who live in Monroe County.

- Please click [here](#) for the flyer.

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## Child Care Works Reminder

The Pennsylvania Subsidized Child Care Eligibility regulations provide information to families regarding their responsibilities to pay the copayment for subsidized childcare. Failure to pay co-payment is identified as an Intentional Program Violation and may result in loss of subsidy benefits.

Please see the following notification to fully understand your co-pay responsibilities. Reach out to your family specialist with any questions.

[Intentional Program Violation - English](#)

[Intentional Program Violation - Spanish](#)

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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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## Developing Strong Mental Health in Children

Children's mental health development starts in their young, formative years. Some children may struggle with social anxieties making it difficult for them to interact with their peers. Others may experience other concerns like separation anxiety, fear of failure or other fears. Creating a supportive, secure and emotionally safe environment for children can help develop strong mental health and allow them to grow into strong adults. You can create a supportive, secure and emotionally safe environment by:

### **Encouraging Emotional Expression**

Teach children healthy ways to verbalize their feelings. It's okay to talk through emotions with your child. You may know what they're feeling and why, but encouraging your child to explain their feelings helps them to understand why they are having those emotions.

### **Stay Attuned to Your Child's Behavioral and Emotional Changes**

Paying attention to shifts in behaviors can signal a need for a mental check-in with your child.

### **Promote Social Connections with Peers**

Some children may just need a little support in interacting with their peers. Modeling positive social interactions can help lessen a child's social anxieties.

Remember each child develops differently. Some children may be outgoing and bold, while others are reserved and shy. The key is creating an environment where your child feels understood and supported.

"Together, we can create a future where mental health support in early childhood is as natural and normalized as physical health care, ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive emotionally and socially." (Kids Mental Health, 2020)

For more information, please following the link: [\*\*Kids Mental Health: Parent Educational Resource\*\*](#)

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### **Changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

Changes to the SNAP eligibility requirements went into effect on **November 1st**.

SNAP recipients must report at least 20 hours of work, education, training, or volunteering per week (or 80 hours per month) if they:



- Are 18-64 years old,
- Do not have a dependent child under 14, and
- Are physically and mentally able to work

SNAP recipients who do not meet these requirements can only receive three months of SNAP benefits within a three-year period. If you're struggling with food insecurity or have the ability to help, you can find a local food bank [here](#).

If you have questions about how to report work, education, training, or volunteer activities, you can contact your caseworker at your local [County Assistance Office](#) or call the Customer Service Center at 877-395-8930

Watch this video for directions on how to upload documentation to your SNAP

## 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 Lehigh Valley Health Network. She shares information about promoting healthy brain development in young children. Click [here](#) to listen.



## Child Development

### The Holiday Season Through a Child's Eyes

#### Early Development and Family Connections

The holiday season is often a time of celebration filled with family gatherings and traditions. But for young children, this time of year can be both magical and overwhelming. As parents and caregivers, it's important to remember that every exciting moment offers opportunities to support children's growth and development.



#### Cognitive Development: Learning Through Holiday Experiences

Children are natural observers and learners. Holiday preparations like cooking, baking, decorating, or wrapping gifts are rich with learning moments. Measuring ingredients builds early math skills, while decorating or crafting

supports fine motor development and creativity. Storytelling traditions or reading holiday books nurture language development and spark imagination.

Try narrating what you're doing: "I'm pouring one cup of flour. Let's count together...one!" Simple, intentional conversations make a big impact on growing brains.

### **Social-Emotional Development: Building Traditions and Belonging**

Holidays help children feel part of something bigger such as a family, community, and a culture. Participating in family traditions provides comfort and a sense of identity. Encourage children to contribute in age-appropriate ways, such as helping to decorate, setting the table, or making cards for loved ones.

However, holidays can also bring changes to routines, visitors, and sensory overload. Maintain consistency where possible: offer regular meals, rest times, and predictable transitions. Let children know what to expect and give them space when they need it.

### **Fostering Empathy and Gratitude**

The holidays are a wonderful time to model generosity and kindness. Involve children in giving. Examples might include donating toys they've outgrown, helping bake cookies or a pie for a neighbor, or making thank-you cards. These small acts build empathy, self-worth, and a lifelong sense of compassion.

### **Remember What Matters Most**

While the season can feel busy, the greatest gift we can offer children is our presence. Shared moments such as reading together, singing songs, or simply enjoying a quiet evening will nurture secure attachment and emotional growth. Children may not remember the tiny details of a holiday, but they will remember how they felt: loved, safe, and included.

### **Takeaway for Parents**

Celebrate the season not by creating a "perfect" holiday, but by creating meaningful moments that support your child's curiosity, confidence, and connection. Those are the memories—and developmental milestones—that last a lifetime.

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## DID YOU KNOW?

Children who receive early childhood education are 25% more likely to graduate high school and four times more likely to complete a college education.

## Resource & Referral

### Food Pantry Services

Food pantries receive regular deliveries from their partner food bank to serve their community. There are many websites that provide lists to food banks in your area! Click on the titles below.



#### [Feeding Pennsylvania](#)

Feeding Pennsylvania is a partner state association of Feeding America. Every year, they help millions of Pennsylvanians access high quality, nutritious food. They do this by partnering with a statewide network of food banks, agencies and meal programs.

#### [PA Navigate](#)

PA-Navigate is a website that provides you with a list of local resources for food, housing, goods, transit, health, money, care, education, work, and legal help. Search under food for a list of local food pantries in your community.

#### [CEO People Helping People](#)

CEO works with food pantries to provide individuals or families with

opportunities to move toward stability and self-sufficiency. Search for food pantries in your community.

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## Health & Safety

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### 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.

**This month's topics include :**

- Preventing choking in young children
- Diabetes Awareness
- Epilepsy Awareness
- Handwashing skills
- Sleeping safely

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### Respiratory Illness Prevention

Keeping young children healthy during respiratory illness season requires a proactive and multi-layered approach. With viruses like influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 circulating, especially during the colder months, parents play a vital role in preventing illness and protecting their family.



#### **Vaccination is your best defense**

For eligible individuals, getting vaccinated is the most effective way to prevent severe illness from respiratory viruses.

- Flu shot: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone six months and older.
- COVID-19 vaccine: The COVID-19 vaccine and booster shots are a crucial part of protecting against the virus and its variants.
- RSV immunization: New immunizations are available for babies under eight months old, and sometimes older infants with certain risk factors, to prevent severe RSV illness. Expecting parents can also discuss receiving an RSV vaccine during pregnancy to protect their newborn.

#### **Practice good hygiene habits**

Germs spread easily through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing, and by touching contaminated surfaces.

- Wash hands frequently: Teach children to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing their nose, before eating, and after playing.
- Use hand sanitizer: For times when soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Teach "cough and sneeze etiquette": Model and teach children to cough or

- Sneeze into a tissue or their elbow to contain germs.
- Sanitize high-touch surfaces: Regularly disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces at home, like doorknobs, toys, and faucets.

## Take steps to limit exposure

You can help reduce your child's risk of infection by minimizing contact with germs.

- Stay home when sick: If your child has a fever or other symptoms, keep them home from school or daycare. Avoid hosting playdates or parties if someone is ill.
- Limit exposure to crowds: During peak virus season, avoid unnecessary trips to crowded indoor spaces where viruses can spread easily.
- Improve ventilation: When possible, open windows to increase air circulation. Using an air purifier with a HEPA filter can also help reduce virus buildup indoors.
- Avoid secondhand smoke: Secondhand smoke can weaken a child's respiratory system and increase their susceptibility to infections.

## Support a healthy immune system

A healthy lifestyle can help strengthen your child's ability to fight off illness.

- Encourage a balanced diet: Provide plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, which contain vitamins and nutrients to support immune function.
- Ensure quality sleep: Make sure your child gets a sufficient amount of rest each night, as this helps their body recuperate and fight off illness.
- Promote physical activity: Regular exercise can help strengthen the lungs and heart, supporting overall respiratory health.

By taking these simple, proactive steps, parents can significantly reduce their child's risk of respiratory illness and help protect the health of their entire family and community.

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## Child Safety & Protection Month

November is National Child Safety and Protection Month, intended to raise awareness about child injury statistics and to educate parents and caregivers on how to create safe environments for their young children. Most childhood injuries can be prevented, whether they occur at home or in other settings. Childcare programs are mandated to maintain these safety measures (as well as many more), and these tips can help parents at home as well.

- Keep all medicines, cleaning supplies and chemicals locked away or stored out of reach of young children.
- Ensure that medication containers have childproof lids.
- Cover electrical outlets with childproof covers.
- Secure heavy furniture and appliances to the wall.
- Keep the phone number for Poison Control in an easily accessible location.

When searching for quality childcare, parents can quickly scan the classroom space to ensure that all of these safety measures are in place.

For statistics on child injuries and more tips for child safety at home, please use the link below.

[November is Child Safety Month - Here's What You Need to Know](#)

## Oral Health

### Encourage Children to Drink Water

Water is important for good oral health and overall health and well-being. Drinking water every day helps move nutrients throughout the body, gets rid of waste, gives skin a healthy glow, keeps muscles moving, and promotes a healthy weight.



Here are some reasons why drinking water helps keep teeth healthy:

- It strengthens teeth. Drinking water with fluoride is one of the easiest and best ways to help prevent tooth decay. Water with fluoride makes it hard for the bacteria that cause tooth decay to create acid. Fluoride also strengthens the outer layers of the teeth, making them more resistant to acid attacks. If the local, county, or state health department says not to drink water from the tap, make sure the new water source contains fluoride.
- It keeps the mouth clean. Drinking water washes away the bacteria that cause tooth decay and also washes away food left in the mouth after eating. Water also dilutes acids made by the bacteria that cause tooth decay. Even though drinking water helps keep the mouth clean, it is still important to brush the teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- It fights dry mouth. Water helps create saliva, which is the mouth's first defense against tooth decay. Saliva contains calcium and other minerals that work into the outer layers of the teeth to keep them strong. It also keeps food moist so it can be swallowed easily and clears away food left in the mouth after eating.
- It does not contain sugar. Water is sugar-free, so drinking it doesn't allow the bacteria that cause tooth decay to make acid. Drinking water instead of beverages that have natural or added sugar lowers the risk for developing tooth decay.

For tips to encourage children to drink water, click [here](#).

## Family Engagement

### Gratitude

November is the perfect month to focus on what we are thankful for. Teaching gratitude can start in the early years. The benefits of gratitude practice in young children include emotional well-being, resilience, stronger social relationships, positive health benefits, and promoting life satisfaction. Take time this month to create a family gratitude project:



- Post a paper tree trunk somewhere in your home. Help your child decorate paper leaves throughout the month listing something they're thankful for. Here is a [free printable](#) to get you started.
- Create a gratitude photo album. You and your child can take pictures throughout the month and create a family gratitude photo album.

- Have family members use permanent or fabric markers to write what they are grateful for on the dinner tablecloth during Thanksgiving dinner. It can be saved and used throughout the holiday season.

*Children's Hospital Colorado: [Gratitude for Kids](#)*

*Johns Hopkins Medicine: [Teaching Your Child Gratitude](#)*

[Visit ELRC Region 12](#)

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