



Community Services for Children

Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 14

November 2025

Serving Lehigh & Northampton Counties

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Region 14 News

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



Programs Offering Free Items

Clothing closets, furniture banks, school and work supply programs

Low-income families in Lehigh and Northampton Counties can receive free clothes, school supplies, household goods and/or furniture. Parents can get items for their kids, such as winter coats, shoes, free birthday toys, books, games and more.

Job seekers can apply for professional work attire or get a free laptop, desktop or Chromebook for work or school. Look here for more information on a [free desktop](#). Free appliances and furniture programs give out refrigerators, washers, dryers, couches, desks for work, AC units and other items for a home.

Visit [Free clothing closets, furniture and school supplies Lehigh County](#) for contact information for the following organizations listed below:

- Agape New Testament Fellowship Clothing Closet
- Salvation Army Allentown and Whitehall - Lehigh Valley Area Services
- The Lehigh Conference of Churches
- Perfect Fit for Working Women
- Everlasting Life Ministries
- Bright Hope - Care Net Lehigh Valley - Allentown Center
- Catholic Charities
- Operation Address the Homeless
- Valor Clinic Foundation
- American Family Services Foundation

Holiday Happenings

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is hosting a variety of holiday events:



- Turkey Giveaways
- Thanksgiving Meal
- Winter Coat Giveaway and Hot Breakfasts

Download or [print the flyer](#) for more information.

THANK-FULL Hearts Foundation Presents: Thank-FULL-Giving Day

Annual Turkey Giveaway – a Free Turkey Basket Giveaway with a Hot Meal served on location! To register for a meal for 4, please call 610-969-6263.

This giveaway is open to residents of the Lehigh Valley and surrounding areas.

Wednesday, November 26th, 2025

9am to 4pm

919 Hamilton St, Allentown, PA

Free Thanksgiving Meals

Businesses and other organizations are offering Thanksgiving meals to help feed those in need.

Below are some food giveaways in the area:

Allentown and Bethlehem

- Saturday, November 23, 12:00 -1:00 p.m. - Everlasting Life Ministries - 224 North Sixth Street - Allentown, Pa 18102 - Provides a take-out Thanksgiving meal on a first-come, first-served basis on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.
- Sunday, November 24, 2:00 - 7:00 p.m. - Operation Address the Homeless - 221 North 7th Street - Allentown, Pa 18102 - Provides a free community Thanksgiving Meal.
- Tuesday, November 26, 2:00 p.m. - Salvation Army Allentown - 144 North 8th Street - Allentown, Pa 18101 - Provides a free sit-down Thanksgiving meal the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Take-out plate for anyone who cannot stay.
- Thursday, November 28, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. - New Bethany Southside Drop-in

Center - 341 West 4th Street - Corner of 4th and Wyandotte streets - Bethlehem, Pa 18015 - Provides a free dine-in meal on Thanksgiving Day.

- Thursday, November 28, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Jordan United Church of Christ Allentown - 1837 Church Road - Allentown, Pa 18104 - Provides a meal on the day of Thanksgiving, for dine-in or take-out.

Slatington:

- Thursday, November 28, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. - Saint John's United Church of Christ Slatington - 15 South Second Street - Slatington, Pa 18080 - Provides a free Thanksgiving meal, available for take-out only. Delivery to shut-ins may be requested in the Northern Lehigh area (Slatington and Walnutport areas only.)

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](#)

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 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)

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](#)

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 account: https://youtu.be/GVNKpss_n4I

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.

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.

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.

This month's topics include :

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

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.

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 14**](#)

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