Community Services for Children

Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 11 December 2025

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

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Region 11 News

Please note that the ELRC offices will be closed on Thursday, December 25th and Thursday, January 1st. We wish you all a safe and healthy holiday season!

Region 11 ELRC Soup Corner

If you are stopping at our Wilkes Barre office, please be sure to help yourself to a can or two of hearty soup to take home and enjoy on a cold day. Soups have been donated by our Region 11 staff to share with our families, providers and community members. Enjoy!

Skating with the Grinch

Skateaway in Wilkes Barre is hosting skating with the Grinch on Thursday December 18th from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm to help

support Nanticoke Wrestling Booster Club.

Click here for the flyer
Don’t miss your chance to skate with the Grinch and celebrate the winter season in style!

Cold Weather is Here

Energy Assistance

Did you know that there are resources available to help with heating assistance, past due bills or winterization of your home?
Please reach out to your energy provider to see what programs are available to you and your family.

- UGI
- PPL
- First Energy

Indoor Activities for Winter Months

Wondering what to do with your young children inside during the cold weather. Project Launch has a list of fun, free, and simple activities for you and your children to enjoy and explore while staying warm.

- Project Launch

Holiday Light Spectacular

Nay Aug Park in Scranton

Available Nightly
Monday, November 24, 2025 - Wednesday, January 7, 2026
5:00 to 10:00 PM

A festive drive-through experience for families and friends, featuring more than 100 dazzling holiday light displays throughout the park.

Admission is free and open to the public, and donations are gratefully accepted to support future displays and enhancements to the Holiday Light Spectacular.

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

Help for Parents

Parenting can be challenging. There's no such thing as a perfect parent, and there are a lot of different ways to be a good one. **The Early Learning GPS** has tips, tools, and resources to help when families encounter challenging behavior with their child.

Parenting is challenging, and this challenge comes with little direction at times. Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) believes every parent needs and deserves two things: Information and support! Visit the **PFSA website** for resources and support.

The ABC's of Safe Sleep

Sleep is essential for your baby's growth, but how your baby sleeps is just as important. The "ABC's of Safe Sleep" practices can help you protect your baby and gives you peace of mind every time you lay them down.

The ABCs of Safe Sleep:
A - Alone: Your baby should always sleep alone, in their own sleep space. No sharing beds, couches, recliners, or sleeping in other soft spaces.
B - Back: For naps and nighttime, always place your baby on their back to sleep.
C - Crib: Your baby should sleep in a crib, bassinet, or pack & play that meets current safety standards; these should not be made more than 10 years ago.

Safe Sleep Space Checklist:

- Firm mattress with a fitted sheet
- No pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, or bumpers
- Room temperature should be comfortable; not too hot or too cold

Other Helpful Tips:

- Dress your baby in sleep appropriate clothing or a wearable blanket instead of loose covers.
- Avoid letting your baby sleep in car seats, swings, or strollers for long periods of time.
- Make sure everyone who cares for your baby knows and follows these sleep safety rules (grandparents, babysitters, older siblings, anyone who will care for the baby during sleep hours)

Following these guidelines for safe sleep significantly lowers the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related incidents. It's one of the most effective ways to protect your baby during their first year of life.

Safe sleep = sweet dreams + peace of mind.

For more information visit: Infant Safe Sleep Practices

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 sleep habits for children. Click here to listen.

Child Development

Keeping Little Learners Safe:
What Families Should Know About Supervision

When you enroll your child in an early learning program, you trust that the environment is safe, nurturing, and closely supervised. One of the most important ways programs maintain this safety is through clear supervision policies and procedures. All programs are required to have a supervision policy/procedure that should be shared with you. If you don't see it in the handbook, ask the Director. Understanding these guidelines helps families feel confident, informed, and connected to the daily experiences of their children.

What Is "Active Supervision"?
High-quality early learning programs use intentional strategies to keep children safe. This includes:

- Positioning teachers so they can see and hear all children
- Continuously scanning the environment
- Counting children during transitions
- Engaging with children to prevent unsafe behaviors
- Responding immediately when a child needs support

These practices are not just "rules"—they are essential for maintaining a safe, predictable environment where children can explore and learn.

Why It Matters for Families
Knowing your program's supervision policy allows you to:
1. Understand how your child stays safe every day.
You'll know what teachers are doing during playtime, transitions, outdoor time, and rest time to ensure children are always within sight and sound.
2. Support consistency between home and school.
When families understand supervision expectations, they can reinforce routines—

such as safe walking, staying with the group, or following transition steps.
3. Strengthen communication with teachers.
If you know the program's procedures, you'll feel more comfortable asking questions, sharing concerns, or offering information that helps staff support your child.
4. Build trust in the program.
Clear supervision policies show that the program is committed to safety, accountability, and high-quality care. When families understand the "why" and the "how," it strengthens trust and partnership.

How Families Can Stay Informed

- Review the family handbook or policies shared at enrollment.
- Ask your child's teacher how supervision looks during different parts of the day.
- Attend family meetings or orientations where policies are explained.
- Share important information about your child (new fears, new behaviors, sensory needs) so staff can supervise more intentionally.

A Shared Responsibility

Supervision is a partnership. When educators and families work together, children receive the safest and most supportive environment possible. Understanding these policies empowers you to be an active part of that partnership—ensuring that your child is protected, engaged, and thriving every day.

Resource & Referral

Health Insurance Coverage

Make sure you're covered! Pennie's Open Enrollment Period for the 2026 coverage year is open now until January 15, 2026.

During this period, individuals and families can enroll in health insurance plans, make changes to their existing coverage, or renew their current plans. It is a critical time for PA residents to ensure they have the necessary health coverage for the upcoming year.

Enrolling is easy! Visit pennie.com to learn more!

PA 211
Help Line for Pennsylvania Families

PA 211 is a free phone number and website that anyone in Pennsylvania can use to get help. It is for families, adults, seniors, and anyone who needs support.

When you contact PA 211, a trained helper will listen to what you need and connect you to programs near you. They can help with things like:

- Free food and meals
- Help paying heating or electric bills
- Diapers and baby supplies

- Clothing and winter items
- Housing or shelter support
- Mental health services
- Childcare resources

How to use it:

- Call 2-1-1
- Text your ZIP code to 898-211
- Visit www.pa211.org

You do not need to know the name of a specific program. Just explain your need and PA 211 will guide you local services quickly and easily.

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.

Staying Safe During the Holidays

Winter weather is around the corner, and with it, the holiday season. While it's a time to celebrate, it's also important to be aware of potential hazards to ensure everyone remains safe during this festive time.

Choosing Safe Toys

- Read the label – check for any warnings and make sure the label says "nontoxic".
- Make sure they are age appropriate and don't have small parts that can be swallowed.
- Keep children away from batteries, especially button and lithium coin batteries.
- Check www.recalls.gov for a list of recalled toys.

Decorating safely

- Check light cords to ensure they aren't frayed.
- Don't leave open flames unattended.
- Keep potentially poisonous plants out of reach. Contact Poison Control if you suspect a poisoning. Call 1-800-222-1222.

Holiday Travel

- Keep an emergency kit in the car. You can find a kit list here: PAsafekids.org

For more holiday and winter safety tips, visit Healthychildren.org.

Talking to Children about Visiting the Dentist

Children need to visit a dentist or dental clinic to keep their teeth and mouth healthy. If children have regular dental visits, the dentist and dental hygienist can take care of their teeth and find oral health problems early. Having regular dental visits also teaches children to value good oral health.

Click here for more information and for tips about preparing your child to visit the dentist.

Family Engagement

Fun as a Family

Winter is a great time to just snuggle in and enjoy each other's company. Be creative. Be silly. Make lots of memories. Here are just a few ideas.

Have a Family Game Night Marathon
Stay in for the evening, get cozy in your jammies and have a game night marathon. There are different games for all ages, but Bingo is a favorite for almost everyone in the family. You can make it even more fun by adding prizes for the winner.

Bake Cookies
Baking cookies with kids can get a little messy, but who doesn't like a home filled with smiling faces and the smells of fresh-baked cookies? It doesn't matter whether it's snickerdoodles, oatmeal raisin or simple chocolate chips, spend an entire day just baking. The one who does the most work gets to lick the spoon!

Have an Arts & Craft Day
Clear off the kitchen table and spend the day getting crafty. Arts & Crafts can range from simple watercolor picture to intricate dreamcatchers. Plan to take your creations and put them to use, whether it be using it, wearing it or putting it on display in the home. Check out these ideas.

Read a Book Together
This may not sound like the most fun family activity, but it is a chance for the entire family to spend quality time together. Whether it's science fiction, fantasy or a classic novel doesn't matter as long as everyone participates.

For more ideas, visit
https://bucketlistjourney.net/family-activities-things-to-do-with-kid

Visit ELRC Region 11

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Connect with us

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