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## Community Services for Children

### Provider Link Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12

### February 2026

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

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To distribute this newsletter to others, copy and share this link:

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## Region 12 Updates

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***Please note that the ELRC offices will be closed on Monday, February 16th for Presidents Day.***

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A large, elegant, black script font word 'congratulations' is centered on a white background, which is itself centered within a light green rectangular frame.

### Keystone STAR Movements

The following programs have demonstrated their commitment to quality by moving to a higher STAR level from October - December 2025.

Congratulations to the providers who have moved to a STAR 2:

- Nurturing Arms Daycare
- Nurturing Arms, Inc

Congratulations to the provider who has moved to a STAR 3:

- Abington Kids Creative Learning Center

Congratulations to the providers who have moved to a STAR 4:

- Little Scholars Academy of Effort
- Blessings Learning Center
- Mind Builders Music and Science Center

## Region 12 Provider Supports



### Directors' Network

Our Director's Network this month will be held on Tuesday, February 17th at 1pm. We will be introducing a new initiative through the Rapid Response Team! We will discuss the new RRT Tool Kit that Community Services for Children has created to be used in your programs to aid in handling challenging behaviors in the classrooms. We would love for as many programs as possible to be represented to hear this information firsthand.

- [Director Network - February](#)

### Provider Team Monthly Calendar

Print out a copy of the Region 12 Provider Team Monthly Calendar for a quick reference to all regional support activities. Remember, your Quality Coach has office hours scheduled on the calendar and is available to meet with you and provide any needed supports

- [Provider Team Calendar - February](#)

## Rapid Response Team Toolkit Free Professional Development

All providers are invited to attend the FREE, 2-hour PD, "Rapid Response Team Social Emotional Toolkit". This training will support providers to identify social-emotional skill gaps, and how to apply proactive, relationship-based strategies to prevent challenging behaviors.



Attendees will be given a RRT Toolkit (one per facility) full of resources to use with classroom staff.

These trainings will be offered throughout the Spring 2026.

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 12:30pm - 2:30pm**  
ELRC Region 12 Office  
820 S. Washington Ave  
Scranton, PA  
Event ID 393688

**Friday, March 13, 2026, 12:30pm - 2:30pm**  
Hughes Main Library  
1002 N. 9th Street  
Stroudsburg, PA  
Event ID 394392

**Friday, March 20, 2026, 12:30pm - 2:30pm**  
Loving Life Lehighton Preschool & Childcare  
1122 Fairland Rd  
Lehighton, PA  
Event ID 394391

Once a program has attended this training, they along with their program staff, will be invited to attend a monthly Community of Practice. Look for more information to come on these supportive sessions.

## Rapid Response Team

**\*\*Update for the Rapid Response Team\*\***

**Funding has been made available to continue the Rapid Response Team through December 2026! If you have any questions about referrals to the Rapid Response Team, please reach out to your Quality Coach.**



The Rapid Response Team provides prompt support in the event a child is at risk of suspension or expulsion. It is a short-term, collaborative approach, designed to connect families and providers with existing tools and resources. Supports are customized to fit a child's or teacher's needs.

Requests can be made using this [RRT Referral form](#). Referrals are processed on a first come, first served basis and we ask that providers prioritize one child referral at a time. One of the goals of the RRT is that strategies and supports will be used across classrooms at the provider so that all children and staff will benefit from these supports.

Before submitting a referral, please discuss with the parent as parental consent is required. Child observations, screenings, and parent conferences should also have been completed so that you can provide the referral coordinator with detailed information regarding the case.

## Building Blocks Learning Center - Celebrating 25 Incredible Years!

What began as a single location on Route 315 in Plains has grown into 12 locations serving families and children across Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Lehigh counties. Today, Building Blocks proudly cares for nearly 1,200 children, creating joyful, nurturing environments and engaging activities that inspire a lifelong love of learning.

Congratulations on 25 years of building bright futures — and here's to the next 25 years of growth, learning, and success!



## Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultants

The Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation is a free resource that supports early childhood programs participating in Keystone STARS in supporting the social and emotional development of children from birth through age 5.

IECMH Consultants work with parents and caregivers in the early care and education system to provide:

- Onsite or virtual classroom observations
- Screening/assessment strategies for children and classrooms
- A process to identify strengths and opportunities for growth
- Facilitate the creation of an action plan to support children and classroom staff
- Referrals for additional supports if needed

Mental health consultation is not about “fixing kids.” Nor is it therapy. Mental health consultants partner with adults to facilitate healthy growth and development for infants and young children. Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health consultation provides support for parents and childcare professionals who work with children experiencing persistent or puzzling challenges. Click [here](#) to view the IECMH brochure.

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## ELRC Updates

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### CCW Reminders



#### 40 Day Absence Policy

Remember to report child absences accurately on your invoice each month. CCW enrolled children are allowed up to 40 absences from July 1st - June 30th. Failure to report absences timely may result in enrollees exceeding the 40-day limit, thus making those days ineligible for payment to the provider.

#### February Invoice Payments

Please note that CCW invoices are due to your Provider Specialist by February 5th. Electronic payments will be made, and checks sent, on February 17th.

#### Provider Self Service

Note that PSS will be running updates on Sunday, 2/1 from noon - 7 pm. Users may experience intermittent outages.

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### STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Awards

#### Final Expense Reports - due March 27



All providers who received a Continuous Quality Improvement Award are required to submit a Final Expense Report no later than March 27, 2026. Keep all receipts for eligible expenses, including payroll records to verify staff bonuses have been paid through payroll and taxes deducted appropriately. All expenses must have occurred from July 1, 2025 - March 13, 2026.

Click [here](#) to access a copy of the Final Expense Report. Providers should follow the instructions attached to the Final Expense Report and return the completed form to their **Quality Coach**. Quality Coaches have office hours available to assist you in completing the expense report if needed.

For eligible expenses, please see the [Announcement ELRC#25-03](#).



## Child Care Staff Retention & Recruitment Grant

Applications were due to the ELRC by January 29, 2026. Provider payments will be issued through direct deposit or check mailed, by March 15, 2026.

If you submitted your grant application but did not hear from your Quality Coach, please reach out and ensure that your grant was processed.

### Rapid Response Team Tip of the Month

#### *Planning Transitions to Prevent Challenging Behaviors*



Within early childhood classrooms, transitions are the times in the day when children move or change from one activity to another. Typically, these include arriving in the classroom, moving from morning meeting to centers, cleaning up after center time to get ready for outdoor play, snack, or nap times, and preparing to go home.

Children's challenging behaviors during transitions may be related to how program staff structure, schedule, and implement transitions. Challenging behavior is more likely to occur when there are too many transitions, when all the children transition at the same time in the same way, when transitions are too long and children spend too much time waiting with nothing to do, and when there are not clear instructions.

#### **Tips for Smooth Transitions:**

- Design a schedule that minimizes transitions and maximizes the time children spend in developmentally appropriate activities. This is the first step in decreasing challenging behavior.
- Establish clear and consistent routines that children can anticipate.
- Provide clear and understandable instructions during transitions to avoid confusion.
- Prepare children for transitions by giving verbal and visual warnings in advance to set them up for success and reduce anxiety.
- Use visual schedules or charts to reinforce expected behavior and help children keep track of what to do next.

By implementing some of these strategies, childcare centers can create a more positive and supportive environment that minimizes the occurrence of challenging behaviors during transitions.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Screen time works  
best when you  
watch together.



### Strengthening Business Practices

The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance is offering a curriculum series, ***Strengthening Business Practices for Child Care Programs***. The training content and activities are designed to strengthen child care providers' foundational knowledge of sound fiscal management and business operations.

The series began in September with a module on Budgets, Projections and Planning. You can still join in on the other modules. Click on each title to register:

#### [Recruiting and Retaining Staff](#)

February 3, 2026  
9:30am - 12:30pm

#### [Financial Reports & Internal Controls](#)

February 7, 2026  
10:00am - 12:00pm

#### [Marketing Your Program](#)

February 21, 2026  
9:00am - 12:00pm

#### [Recruiting and Retaining Staff](#)

February 28, 2026  
9:00am - 12:00pm

### Budgets, Projections, and Planning

March 2, 2026  
10:00am - 12:00pm

For future module offerings for **Center & Family-Based providers**, click on this flyer

- [2025-2026 Business Practice Registration Flyer](#)

For an overview of sessions offered, click on this flyer:

- [Business Practices for Child Care Programs](#)

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## **Recognizing Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Education Professionals**

*Submission deadline February 4, 2026*

The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) would like to recognize those in the early childhood education field who have made accomplishments during 2025 in the following areas:

- Academic
- Years of Service
- Retirement

These recognitions apply to all staffing positions within an early learning program, including, but not limited to:

- Directors
- Classroom staff (teachers, aides, etc.)
- Support staff (receptionists, janitors, kitchen staff, etc.)

Click [here](#) for the application. The deadline to submit is February 4, 2026.

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## **Update Your Program Info on [FindChildCare.pa.gov](http://FindChildCare.pa.gov)!**

Make sure your online program profile is updated with the correct information. Log in and update your information in **PELICAN Provider Self-Service**.

Why it matters:

- **Accurate info = more connections.** If something is out of date, families searching for care may never reach out.
- **Complete details boost visibility.** Missing info, especially the ages of children you serve, can prevent your program from showing up in advanced searches, like county filters on [FindChildCare.pa.gov](http://FindChildCare.pa.gov).
- **A polished profile helps families find the right fit.** The more complete your listing, the easier it is for families to discover everything your program offers.

If you have questions or need help updating your profile, the PELICAN Help Desk is ready to support you at 877-491-3818 or [ra-eln@pa.gov](mailto:ra-eln@pa.gov). Help Desk hours are 8:30 AM–5:00 PM, Monday–Friday. You can also [explore resources](#) to help you get your information updated.

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The Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA) has announced the release of new TEACH Scholarship tip sheets created to make college access, staff support, and workforce investment clearer and easier than ever.



### For Early Educators

- College Enrollment Checklist for ECE Professionals: A step-by-step guide to help you get started
- College Enrollment Checklist for High School Students: Helping the next generation to plan their career in the early childhood education field (coming soon!)

### For Early Childhood Programs

- Making Release Time Work: Practical strategies to help employers support staff and receive financial assistance
- Sponsoring Staff in TEACH: What employers need to know to invest in their staff with confidence

*TEACH Early Childhood® Pennsylvania is administered by the Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA) and is a licensed program of Early Years.*



### **Have an International Degree? Get it evaluated at no cost to you!**

OCDEL and the Pennsylvania Key have developed an initiative to better support the Early Childhood Education workforce who obtained education outside of the U.S. by creating an internal process for foreign degree

evaluations. This new resource helps reduce administrative and financial burden to our workforce members and limits out-of-pocket expenses.

Foreign Degree evaluations for individuals applying for placement on the Career Pathway will occur seamlessly through services provided by the Educational Credential Evaluators. More information can be found on the Pennsylvania Key webpage: [International Education Evaluation](#).

To better support the field and to help determine strengths and opportunities of this new initiative, this service is available at no cost for the duration of this fiscal year (June 30, 2026). After this fiscal year, the service will be available at a substantial discount. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences at [registry@pakeys.org](mailto:registry@pakeys.org) to help inform future implementation and improvements.

## **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 staff, children and families.



Click [here](#) to view their newsletters and download the most recent edition.

## **Virtual Office Hours**

You can now connect with ECELS staff during office hours. ECELS staff can discuss any questions and concerns you may have, pertaining to healthy childcare practices. Please register for an appointment for their office hours by following this [link](#). After you register, you will receive an email confirmation with your appointment information.

For a full list of topics visit their [webpage](#).

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## **Oral Health**

### *Helping Children Stop Using a Pacifier*

Sucking on pacifiers is a normal reflex for infants and toddlers; however, long-term use of pacifiers can affect a child's bite and the growth of the jaws and bones that support their teeth. If a child shows no interest in giving up their pacifier by age 4, they may need help to stop.

[Here](#) are some ways to help a child stop using their pacifier for you to share with families:

- Talk to the child. Tell the child why you want them to stop using their pacifier. Say to them you believe they can stop.
- Take the pacifier away gradually. Let the child use it only at certain times, like naptime or bedtime. Slowly increase the amount of time that the child isn't using a pacifier.
- Reward the child. For each day they don't use their pacifier, put a star on the calendar. At the end of an agreed upon time period, give them a non-food reward, like a trip to the park.
- Encourage the child to throw their pacifier away. If the child asks for it, remind them that they threw it away. Tell the child they're a big kid, and big kids don't use pacifiers.
- Trade the pacifier. Ask the child to put the pacifier under their pillow. Tell them the pacifier fairy or someone else will take the pacifier while they sleep and leave a gift instead. If the child asks for the pacifier, remind them they traded it for a gift.



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Want to add staff or other members of your team to this newsletter? Email [estair@cscinc.org](mailto:estair@cscinc.org) and specify which Regional Newsletter you would like. Requests will be added to next month's distribution.

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[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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