Community Services for Children

Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 11 February 2026

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 Monday, February 16th for Presidents Day.

Managing Emotional Mayhem in Towanda

Classes for parents and caregivers to support you in handling BIG feelings when coping with your child. Childcare is provided on site! Classes are every Tuesday at 6pm from March 31st to April 28th.

- **Click here for the flyer**.

Bloomsburg Events

Free event-BloomCON 2026
BloomCON is a hands-on kid-friendly conference for students aged 7-17 and their parents or guardians.

This FREE event is held at Kehr Union Center Bloomsburg University.
Tickets and pre-registration are required.
For the exciting details, **see the attached flyer**.

Toddler Time in Bloomsburg

The Bloomsburg Children's Museum is holding Toddler Time every Friday 10am-12pm from January 9th-April 3rd. Each week will be filled with crafts, games, storytelling and music. Recommended for children under 5 years old.

- **Click here for the flyer** and for information on how to register.

Dental Clinic in Luzerne County

Free dental cleaning at Luzerne County Community College Benco Dental Clinic during the spring semester.
Cleanings will be done on:

- Mondays 3pm-6:30pm,
- Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:30am-12pm
- Fridays 1:30pm-5pm.

Call 570-740-0446 to schedule an appointment.
For more information, click here.

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

Child Care Works Reminder

40 Day Absence Policy

Children enrolled in the Child Care Works subsidy program, are allowed to have up to 40 days of absence per year. If your child is absent for more than 40 days in the fiscal year (July 1-June 30), you will be responsible to pay the provider the daily rate for each day of absence beginning with the 41st absence.

You must pay the provider's daily rate in addition to your weekly co-payment.

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 child care 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 as well.

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

Tips to Beat Winter Boredom

When it's too cold to go outside to play, here are some family fun ideas to avoid cabin fever.

1. Turn off Technology. Tablets, phones, and TV seem to be the easy solution to boredom; however, too much screen time is associated with poor physical health, eye strain, sleep disturbances and impaired social development.
2. Think outside the living room. Check out some local indoor playgrounds or trampoline parks. Other fun activities for family may include bowling, ice skating, and roller skating. Many children's libraries host a variety of crafts, science, reading, and play activities.
3. Burn off energy indoors. Create obstacle courses throughout the house, have a dance party, build forts, or play hide and seek.
4. Get creative. Grab some paper, crayons, scissor, glue, paint and create something.
   Check out these websites for some fun creative ideas:
   - **Pinterest**
   - **Crayola**
   - **Art Crafty Kids**
   - **Projects with Kids**

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 Nyanda Finley de Santos from Community Services for Children, as she encourages parents to advocate for their child and gives tips to build relationships with teachers. Click **here** to listen.

PARENT
PROJECT
PODCAST
CSC
Community Services for Children

DID YOU KNOW?
Screen time works best when you watch together.
United Way
United Way of Berks County

Child Development

Why Lesson Plans Matter in Early Childhood Programs

All programs that are at least a STAR 2 on the Keystone STARS rating scale, are to provide lesson plans in each classroom.
When you hear the words *lesson plan*, you might picture worksheets, strict schedules, or children sitting quietly at desks. In early childhood, lesson plans look quite different—and they play a vital role in helping your child learn, grow, and feel secure.

What Is a Lesson Plan in Early Childhood?

In early learning programs, lesson plans are thoughtful guides that help teachers plan meaningful experiences throughout the day. These plans are based on how young children learn best—through play, exploration, routines, relationships, and hands-on activities.
Lesson plans help teachers:

- Support children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.
- Plan activities that match children's ages, interests, and abilities
- Create predictable routines that help children feel safe and confident.
- Make sure learning happens naturally during play, meals, transitions, and outdoor

Rather than being rigid, good lesson plans are **flexible** and responsive. Teachers adjust them based on children's needs, moods, and interests—because children are always growing and changing.

Why Lesson Plans Are Important for Your Child

Lesson plans help ensure that learning is **intentional**, not accidental. They help teachers think ahead about:

- What skills children are developing (like sharing, language, problem-solving, or self-help skills)
- How to support each child as an individual
- How to build on what children already know and love.

This planning leads to richer play, stronger relationships, and more opportunities for your child to feel successful.

How Families Can Partner with Teachers

Families are an essential part of early learning—your insight helps teachers plan better experiences for your child. Here are some simple ways to partner with your child's caregiver or teacher:

- Share information: Let teachers know about your child's interests, routines, new skills, or challenges at home.
- Ask questions: If you see a lesson plan posted, ask how activities support learning or how you can extend them at home.
- Support routines: Consistent routines between home and school (like bedtime, mealtime, or self-help skills) help children feel secure.
- Stay connected: Read newsletters, classroom notes, or messages so you know what your child is working on.
- Celebrate growth: Talk with your child about what they did during the day and celebrate effort—not just outcomes.

Working Together for Success

When teachers plan intentionally and families stay engaged, children benefit the most. Lesson plans are one-way teachers show care for your child's development—and family partnerships help bring those plans to life.

Together, you and your child's teacher can create a supportive learning community where children feel valued, capable, and excited to learn every day.

Resource & Referral

Opportunities to Keep SNAP Benefits

Due to changes in federal rules, certain Pennsylvanians' SNAP benefits may have ended starting on January 1, 2026. If your SNAP benefits are ending, you will receive a notice in the mail.
If you receive notice that your SNAP benefits are ending, it may be because you need to meet the new federal rules about work and reporting requirements and you are not currently doing so, **or** you need to let PA DHS know that you are meeting the requirements.

Here are some tools and information that can help you meet the new work requirements:
Employment & Training Programs

- **SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) services** are important for Pennsylvanians who receive SNAP and must follow new federal work and reporting requirements. More information including E&T programs, supportive services, and requirements are available on the **DHS E&T website**.
- **PA CareerLink** is a website where people looking for work can search and apply for jobs in their area. Some counties have CareerLink offices where job seekers can visit for in-person help in finding job or training opportunities. To find the office near you, go to the **PA CareerLink website** and scroll to the "Find Your Local Office" section on the homepage.

Volunteer opportunities on PA Navigate
PA Navigate has a new volunteer opportunities search feature to help SNAP recipients maintain their benefits.

1. Go to **pa-navigate.org**, enter your ZIP code, and search for "volunteer opportunity."
2. A list of local programs offering volunteer opportunities appears.
3. Contact the organization where you want to volunteer to learn more and get connected to volunteer opportunities.
4. The organization where you volunteer completes the **Community Service Verification Form** to track your volunteer hours.

If You Need Immediate Help With Food

If you are no longer receiving SNAP benefits and need help with food, visit **feedingpa.org** to find a food bank near you. PA Navigate **pa-navigate.org/** can also help you find food and other resources in your zip code.

Keystone Scholars

A baby with a higher education savings account at birth is three times more likely to pursue education or training after high school and four times more likely to graduate! Pennsylvania is making it easy for families to start a PA529 educational savings account by starting that account with a $100 deposit for all babies born or adopted after January 2019.

Scan the QR code for more information and register your child at **www.pa529.com/keystone.**

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.

Heart Healthy Habits

Modeling heart healthy habits is important since children learn more from what they see than from what they are told. Children will often imitate the adults in their lives so they will copy eating habits, activity levels, and coping skills.

Healthy Eating
What it looks like:
- Eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Limiting sugary drinks, salty snacks, and highly processed foods.

Why it matters:
- Supports healthy growth and energy.
- Help prevent obesity, diabetes, and heart disease later in life.

Regular Physical Activity
What it looks like:
- Moving every day through play, sports, walking, or family activities.
- Limiting lengthy periods of sitting or screen time.

Why it matters:

- Strengthens the heart and muscles.
- Improves mood, focus, and sleep.

Drinking Water

What it looks like:

- Choosing water over sugary drinks most of the time.

Why it matters:

- Helps the heart pump blood more easily.
- Keeps the body energized and focused.

Healthy Sleep Routines

What it looks like:

- Consistent bedtimes and calming bedtime routines.

Why it matters:

- Helps regulate blood pressure and heart health.
- Supports learning, behavior, and emotional control.

Managing Stress & Emotions

What it looks like:

- Talking about feelings.
- Practicing calming strategies like deep breathing or quiet time.

Why it matters:

- Reduces strain on the heart.
- Builds emotional resilience and self-confidence.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

To find out why oral health is so important for children, visit this **webpage**. Free materials from the American Dental Association can be found **here**.

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:

- 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, 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.

Family Engagement

Family Game Night

Winter in Pennsylvania is a great time to strengthen or start the tradition of family game night! There are many benefits to family game night. With young toddlers, you can reinforce important skills such as counting, adding, and subtracting while playing board games. Candyland and Chutes and Ladders are classic first games. If you have preschoolers at home, they will not only build on these skills but also practice using their memory and focusing their attention.

Additionally, there are social-emotional benefits. Here are just a few:

1. Stress reduction - Playing a game helps reduce stress and promotes relaxation by releasing calming chemicals in the brain (endorphins).
2. Emotional development - Playing games helps children learn how to take turns, play fair, follow rules, and treat others respectfully.
3. Cognitive stimulation - Games with planning, thinking, and problem solving keeps the mind sharp.
4. Laughter - With any game night there is bound to be periods of laughter. This lifts moods and reduces stress.
5. Routines - Children love routines. It is a calming thing for them to know what to expect, and they feel secure. When Game Night is consistent, children can anticipate it.

Lastly, Game Night is such a fun way to spend time together! You can pick a theme, create a cozy space, or a snack station to add to the fun.

- Source: Community Education, **The Benefits of Family Board Game Night**. 12/19/2025.

Visit ELRC Region 11

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