

Community Services for Children Provider Link Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 13 March 2026

Serving Berks & Schuylkill Counties

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Region 13 Updates



Welcome New Providers

The Early Learning Resource Center would like to welcome the following new programs to our region! We look forward to working with you. ELRC staff are here to assist with your participation in Child Care Works, Keystone STARS, and to provide you with local resources and referrals.

- Sinking Spring Kindercare
 - Daisy Day Care 3 LLC
 - Childrens Smile LLC
 - Princes and Princesses Early Learning Center
-

Region 13 Provider Supports

Directors' Network

The ELRC 13 Directors' Network meetings are a great way to stay connected! Each month we meet to reflect on relevant early childhood topics, share updates, and reflect on the leadership role. In March, a special guest from the IU will share

information about the strategies the IU is using in ECE classrooms and will answer your questions about the process. Join us virtually on March 3rd at 1 PM for meaningful conversations, the opportunity to collaborate, and to inspire each other. See flyer for more details and to register.

- [Click here](#) for additional details and to register prior to the meeting.



Quality Coach Office Days

Quality Coaches offer a short virtual learning session each month for classroom staff. These opportunities are aimed at exploring new skills and strategies to enhance the learning experience for children. Each month a different topic is the focus of the session and idea sharing. On March 3rd at 1 pm we will be joined by a special guest from the IU to share information on embedded instruction and answer questions about the IU process. Encourage your teachers to attend! See flyer for more details and to register.

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

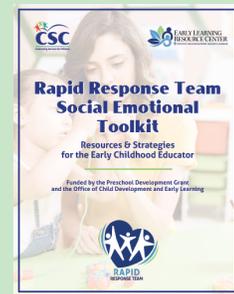
Regional Calendar

Check out our calendar for a quick reference of all regional support activities and professional development opportunities.

- [Region 13 Calendar-March 2026](#)

Rapid Response Team Toolkit Free Professional Development

All Region 13 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.

Thursday, March 5, 2026, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

Jerusalem Child Care Center
252 Dock St

Schuylkill Haven, PA

Event ID 395044

Tuesday, March 24, 2026, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

ELRC Region 13 Office

1138 Rockland St

Reading, PA

Event ID 393642

Saturday, April 18, 2026, 10:00am - 12:00pm

ELRC Region 13 Office

1138 Rockland St

Reading, PA

Event ID 395360

Tuesday, April 28, 2026, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

ELRC Region 13 Office

1138 Rockland St

Monday, May 4, 2026, 6:00pm - 8:00pm
ELRC Region 13 Office
1138 Rockland St
Reading, PA
Event ID 395361

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.

Free Professional Development

The United Way of Berks County will be offering free professional development on Monday, October 12th.

- [See this flyer](#) for details and save the date.

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



Schuylkill County Kindergarten Registration

Kindergarten Registration time is almost upon us. Here is some information for you to share with your families in Schuylkill County about available programs and how to register for them.

- [Click here](#) to print the flyer and share with your families.

Thanks to Child Development, Inc. for sharing this flyer!

ELRC Updates

CCW Reminders



The Child Care Works provider agreement outlines expectations for suspension and expulsion of children enrolled.

- Providers must have a written expulsion and suspension policy that is shared with parents and includes a protocol to apply when an at-risk child is identified.
- Provider must contact the ELRC prior to suspending or expelling a CCW child. Please contact your Provider Specialist to report your intentions prior to taking action.
- Note that our Quality Coaches are available for additional supports using the Rapid Response Team (see Rapid Response Team information above).

March Invoice Payments

Please note that CCW invoices are due to your Provider Specialist by March 5th. Electronic payments will be made, and checks sent, on March 16th.

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

Provider payments for the CCSRR grant may be delayed. To reflect the importance of the early learning workforce, OCDEL is reviewing available funding for the Retention and Recruitment Bonus amounts to determine the opportunity for an increased award amount.

Policy Reminders:

- Providers must pay retention awards to staff within 45 days of receipt of payment from the ELRC.
- Awards must be paid through payroll with appropriate taxes withheld.
- Recruitment awards must be spent or returned to the ELRC by June 30th.
- Final Expense Reports will be due by July 31st.

Staff Employment Changes:

- Staff who have given notice when the program receives their payment, must be paid their award.
- Staff who have left employment prior to the receipt of award from the ELRC, provider may move those funds into the recruitment award to pay a sign on bonus for the staff replacement (cannot exceed number of recruitment slots).



THANK GOVERNOR SHAPIRO FOR PRIORITIZING THE ECE WORKFORCE!



Governor Shapiro delivered his Administration's 2026-2027 Pennsylvania budget priorities which include an additional \$10 million for the Child Care Recruitment and Retention Program, \$7.5 million for Pre-K Counts, and \$2 million for Head Start!



Survey: Childcare Staffing Crisis

Start Strong PA is collecting information about the on-going childcare staffing crisis as part of their state-wide advocacy efforts. Please take just a few minutes to complete the survey: [PA Child Care Directors & Owners - Take the Child Care Crisis Survey Today!](#)

Rapid Response Team Tip of the Month



Early childhood professionals have an important role in providing reassurance and explaining frightening or harmful experiences (in developmentally appropriate terms) to young children. When adults acknowledge children's emotions and help children understand their experiences, they increase children's feelings of safety and connection to others. This type of supportive environment can help reduce the negative developmental effects of trauma.

It is estimated that nationally, 33.3% of children were exposed to at least one adverse childhood experience. Staff may not be aware of how these traumas can affect classroom behaviors nor how to respond.

The University of Pittsburgh is offering FREE trauma informed care trainings to providers. Click [here](#) to access their modules.

An infographic with a white rounded rectangle on an orange background. The text inside the rectangle reads "DID YOU KNOW?" in green, followed by "Preschoolers learn more by pretending than watching." in dark blue. In the bottom right corner of the infographic is the United Way logo and the text "United Way of Berks County".

Start Planning Now for the Week of the Young Child

Every April, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) promotes the Week of the Young Child. This week



celebrates the importance of high-quality early learning, and the critical role early childhood educators play in a child's development and learning.

The ELRC would love to see the creative ways you are engaging families, children and other partners in the WOYC activities. Send pictures and stories to your Quality Coach and with your permission, we will add some submissions to the Provider Link newsletter or social media.

It's not too late to take part in this fun week!

- Monday, April 13th: Music Monday
- Tuesday, April 14th: Tasty Tuesday
- Wednesday, April 15th: Work Together Wednesday
- Thursday, April 16th: Artsy Thursday
- Friday, April 17th: Family Friday

Visit NAEYC's [website](#) for celebration ideas and other resources.

PA Farm to School Network Virtual Open House

The PA Farm to School Network (PFSN) is hosting a virtual open house for farmers/growers, educators, school food service directors, early care and education (ECE) providers, parents, and community partners to connect and learn more about farm to school resources!



[Click here to attend the virtual meeting](#)

Thursday, March 26th,
3:00 pm-4:30 pm



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:

[Budgets, Projections, and Planning](#)

March 2, 2026

10:00am - 12:00pm

[Financial Reports & Internal Controls](#)

March 11, 2026

10:00am - 12:00am

[Marketing Your Program](#)

March 18, 2026

10:00am - 1:00pm

[Recruiting and Retaining Staff](#)

March 25, 2026

[Budgets, Projections, and Planning](#)

April 1, 2026

1:00pm - 3:00pm

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](#)

Resources for Child Care Serving Immigrant Families

NAEYC is sharing key tools and resources to help ECE programs support educators, families, and children who are immigrants, as well as those who have immigrant friends, families, colleagues, and loved ones. Programs should create welcoming environments where each and every child can thrive, which means their families must also feel encouraged to fully participate and collaborate to support children's educational growth.

[Resources for Child Care and Early Learning Programs Serving Immigrant Families | NAEYC](#)

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.



Please share the QR code with the families in your program and for more information visit www.pa529.com/keystone.



Tax Form 1099

If you have received grant funding or Child Care Works payments from Community Services for Children in 2025, you should have received your 1099. Please reach

out to your Provider Specialist with any questions. Please note that this 1099 will include any grant funds that were received in 2025.

FREE Little Library

OCDEL is offering all certified early learning providers the opportunity to request a Little Library at no cost to the program. Quantities are limited to one per physical location.



Little Libraries are small, free book-sharing boxes that allow community members to “take a book, share a book.” They offer a simple but powerful way to increase access to reading materials, encourage family engagement, and promote a love of reading. For early learning programs, a Little Library can be an additional way to support early literacy while reinforcing your role as a trusted community leader and resource.

Programs that receive a Little Library will be responsible for maintaining and restocking books over time. To help you get started, OCDEL will provide the first nine books. In addition, the first 500 programs to submit a request will also receive a copy of a previous PA One Book selection.

To request your Little Library, please visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/HHJNQTZ. Click here for more [information](#).



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 to help inform future implementation and improvements.

Leadership Conference Opportunity

The Association for Early Learning Leaders is holding their annual conference April 15-17 in Reno, NV. There will be over 35 sessions on leadership, operations, finance and more. See this [flyer](#) for more information.



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 newsletter 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](#).

Disinfection vs. Sanitation

In childcare settings, maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our children is of utmost importance. Two key processes that contribute to this goal are sanitation and disinfection. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they represent different practices that serve distinct purposes.



Sanitation refers to the process of reducing the number of germs, dirt, and impurities on surfaces to a safe level. This is typically achieved through cleaning practices that involve soap, water, and physical removal of debris.

Disinfection, on the other hand, involves using chemical agents to kill or inactivate germs on surfaces. This process is vital in preventing the spread of illnesses, particularly in settings where children are in close contact with one another. Disinfection is often applied after sanitation, as its most effective on surfaces that are already clean.

1. **Establish a Routine:** Create a regular schedule for cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces such as toys, tables, and doorknobs. Daily routines help ensure that these areas remain clean.
2. **Use the Right Products:** Choose EPA-approved disinfectants that are effective against a broad range of pathogens. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for use, including contact time and dilution ratios. Avoid using these products with children present and always keeps these products locked away out of reach of the children.
3. **Educate Staff:** Provide training for staff on the differences between sanitation and disinfection, as well as best practices for both.
4. **Involve Children:** Teach children about the importance of cleanliness through fun activities, such as handwashing songs or cleaning games. Engaging them in the

Avian Flu Alert

Feathers can carry more than fluff. Backyard birds can spread germs. Adult chickens, baby chicks, and other birds may carry Salmonella, E. coli, or bird flu.



Touching poultry, their eggs, or items in their coop and then touching your face or mouth can spread germs that may make you sick. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after spending time near poultry - and closely supervise children around backyard flocks.

See this [flyer](#) for more information. Then print and post it to share with the families in your program.



Getting Oral Health Care during Pregnancy

Oral health care during pregnancy is important for mom and baby. Getting oral health care, including cleanings, X-rays, fillings, and pain medication, is safe during pregnancy.

Please share these tips for getting oral health care during pregnancy with families:

- Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, drinking water throughout the day and eating nutritious foods will help keep you and your baby healthy.
- If your last dental visit was more than six months ago or if you have an oral health problem or concern, make an appointment as soon as possible.
- Getting oral health care during the second trimester is best. During the first trimester, you might have morning sickness. During the third trimester, it can be uncomfortable to lie on your back in the dental chair.
- Tell the dental clinic staff that you are pregnant and your due date. This information will help them provide the best care and keep you comfortable.
- Tell the staff about any changes in your teeth or gums. Also, tell them about all medications, including vitamin and mineral supplements, that you are taking.

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

Visit [ELRC Region 13](#)

Community Services for Children | elrc13@cscinc.org | www.cscinc.org

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