

Community Services for Children Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 11 April 2026

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

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Region 11 News

Luzerne County Mental Health Awareness Walk

Luzerne and Wyoming Counties are holding a Mental Health Awareness Walk on May 17th from 9:30-12pm at Kirby Park. This is a rain or shine event. Register by April 27th. There will be community resources on hand. Please see the flyer for more information.

- [Mental Health Awareness Walk flyer](#)
-

Columbia County Mental Health Awareness Fair 2026

Berwick Hospital Center located at 701 E 16th Street in Berwick is holding their 3rd Annual Mental Health Awareness Fair on May 12th from 1-4:30pm. This event is a great opportunity to connect with the community, share resources and promote mental health awareness and wellness. Click [here](#) for more information.



Montour County Mindful Miles

Columbia, Montour, Synder and Union Behavioral Health & Developmental Services is holding a Mindful Miles walk/run on May 16th from 9-12pm at the Danville Area Community Center. There will be vendors to explore wellness,

mental health, and community resources. Please see this [flyer](#) for more information and to register.

National Alliance on Mental Illness Family to Family

NAMI Family to Family is a free education program for family, friends, and significant others of adults with mental health conditions. This 8-session program is designed to increase understanding and support skills. It will be held on Thursdays, starting April 30th from 5-7pm through June 18th. For more information and to register, please see the flyer.

- [Family to Family flyer](#)

Ramp It Up in Nanticoke!

The Mill Memorial Library located at 495 E Main St. in Nanticoke is hosting Ramp It Up! Come to the library on May 12th so your children can design and test ramps to explore motion, gravity, and building. Using balls, cars, and recycled materials, children will build, experiment, and problem-solve while learning how ramps change speed and movement.

- [Ramp It Up Flyer](#)

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 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](#)

Gardening Together

Spring has sprung! A great way to get children outside is to include them in gardening. Gardening with children promotes not only a child's physical health but also their emotional wellbeing and fosters a connection with healthy eating habits. Gardening can offer a calming environment that can help children regulate emotions. Participating in growing food can encourage children's healthy eating habits by allowing them to choose fresh fruits and vegetables.

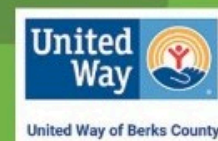


Gardening together also helps caregivers and guardians connect with their child in a hands-on experience together that can have lasting effects on their relationship. So, get dirty this spring and plant something you and your child can enjoy and nurture together!

Sources: [Kids Gardening](#) and [RHS Gardening](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

**Family meals
without screens
help kids connect
and focus.**



The Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA), encourages you to take action to support Early Childhood Education funding. Visit [Start Strong PA](#) to read more about this issue and sign a petition for lawmakers to consider funding to support families and providers in the 2026-2027 PA state budget.



[Start Strong PA](#) website

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 Susan Lettera, former Director of Lehigh County Integrated Services. Susan shares her expertise regarding family group decision making. Families know best what their children need and can work with a coordinator to assist in decision making process. Click [here](#) to listen.



Child Development

Why It's Important to Understand a Provider's Suspension and Expulsion Policy

Across Pennsylvania, early learning programs are working to reduce suspension and expulsion. With guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) and expectations within Keystone



STARS, programs are expected to support children's social and emotional development rather than remove them from care whenever possible.

As a family, understanding your child's program's policy is an important step in being an active partner in your child's success.

Know What to Expect

Understanding the policy helps you know the steps your child's program will take if challenging behaviors arise. Programs are expected to observe behavior, identify possible causes, and teach new skills—but families play a key role in supporting that process.

Stay Actively Involved

Keystone STARS emphasizes strong family engagement. This means families are not just informed—they are part of the solution. When concerns are shared, your input, insights, and consistency at home are critical in helping your child succeed.

Work Together on Support Strategies

Programs focus on support first. This may include behavior plans, social-emotional skill building, and classroom adjustments. Families strengthen these efforts by:

- Reinforcing strategies at home
- Communicating changes or concerns
- Sharing what works best for their child

Communicate Early and Often

Open communication with your child's teacher helps prevent concerns from escalating. Asking questions, sharing observations, and staying engaged helps ensure your child receives consistent support.

Understand When Immediate Action May Be Needed

While suspension and expulsion are discouraged, if safety is an immediate concern for a child, other children, or staff, removal may be necessary.

Advocate for Your Child

Knowing the policy helps you ask informed questions, understand decisions, and ensure your child is treated fairly in a safe and supportive environment.

What Families Can Do

- Ask for and review your program's policy
- Stay engaged in conversations about your child
- Partner with teachers to support learning and behavior
- Follow through with strategies at home

When families understand their role and work in partnership with their child's program, they help create supportive, inclusive environments where all children can succeed.

Resource & Referral

SUN Bucks: Pennsylvania's Summer EBT Program

SUN Bucks is a summer food program that helps families buy groceries for their children when school is out. During the school year, many students receive free or reduced-price meals at school. In the summer, those meals are not available, so SUN Bucks helps fill that gap.

Eligible families receive \$120 for each child on an EBT card that can be used to buy food at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other places that accept EBT. The program is for school-aged children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals or who receive certain public benefits.

Many families will get SUN Bucks automatically, but some may need to apply. Families can check their eligibility and learn more through Pennsylvania's benefits website. SUN Bucks helps make sure kids have access to healthy food all summer long so they can stay strong, active, and ready for the next school year.

Check out this website for eligibility guidelines, application and other information: <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/SUNBucks>



SNAP Employment & Training Programs

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) has developed communications tools available at dhs.pa.gov/work to help Pennsylvanians understand new SNAP work and reporting requirements and how to meet them.



[SNAP Employment and Training \(E&T\) services](#) are important for Pennsylvanians who receive SNAP and must follow new federal work and reporting requirements. As of fall 2025, to keep or become eligible for SNAP benefits, certain people will have to meet work requirements that include working, volunteering, or participating in an education or training program for at least 20 hours a week (or 80 hours each month) AND [report that they are meeting these requirements](#).

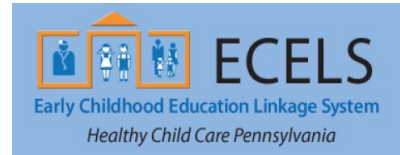
If SNAP recipients do not meet the work and reporting requirements, they can only receive three months of SNAP benefits in a three-year period. SNAP E&T programs can help SNAP recipients meet these new work, training, and education requirements. [More Than a Job](#) is a national campaign designed to

raise awareness about SNAP E&T services and encourage enrollment among SNAP participants.

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.

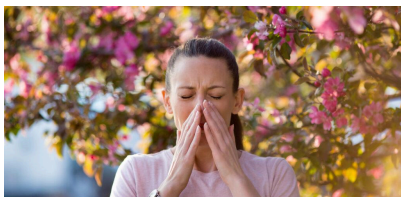
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Child Abuse Prevention Month shines a national spotlight on the importance of centering families and building communities where children can grow up safe, healthy, and supported.

Prevention happens when families have access to the resources, relationships, and supports they need to stay steady through every twist and turn of life. When communities invest in prevention, each turn of support unlocks new possibilities and stronger foundations for children and families.

See these resources and put an end to child abuse and neglect. Reach out to the Early Learning Resource Center if you need assistance connecting to resources in your area.

- [Know the Signs of Abuse](#)
- [5 Body Safety Rules](#)
- [5 Internet Safety Rules](#)



Living with Seasonal Allergies

As winter ends and temperatures begin to rise, many families notice the start of seasonal allergies. In March, trees begin releasing pollen into the air, which can trigger allergy symptoms in

both adults and children. Young children may not always be able to explain how they feel, so parents might notice behaviors such as frequent sneezing, rubbing their eyes, or a constant runny nose. Seasonal allergies can sometimes look like a cold. However, allergy symptoms often last longer and may include:

- Sneezing
- Itchy or watery eyes
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Scratchy throat
- Dark circles under the eyes
- Frequent nose rubbing or sniffing

Unlike colds, allergies do not usually cause fever or body aches. Parents can help minimize exposure to pollen with a few simple habits:

- Check the daily pollen count and limit outdoor play on very high pollen days.

- Have children wash their hands and face after playing outside.
- Change clothes after outdoor activities.
- Keep windows closed during high pollen times.
- Shower or bathe children before bedtime to remove pollen.

If allergy symptoms are affecting your child's sleep, comfort, or ability to play, it may be helpful to speak with your child's pediatrician. They can recommend safe allergy treatments for children, including antihistamines or other options. With the right strategies, children with seasonal allergies can still enjoy all the fun that spring brings. Paying attention to symptoms early and reducing pollen exposure can help keep kids healthy, active, and comfortable throughout the season.

For more information, visit [Healthy Children](#) connected with the American Academy of Pediatrics and search "Seasonal Allergies."

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day Saturday, April 25th

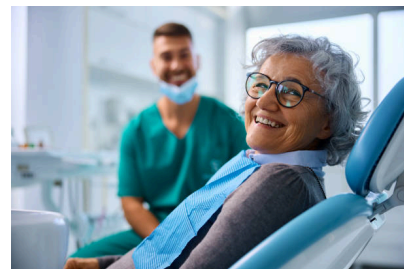
National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is held twice each year, in the Spring and Fall. It is important to dispose of unwanted, unused, and expired medications from your home to prevent misuse and death. Too many people die each year due to drug poisoning or overdose.

Add your medicine cabinet to your spring cleaning list and remove unused, unwanted, and expired medications.

Click [here](#) to find a collection site near you.

How Smoking Affects Oral Health

Smoking can lead to disease and disability, harming nearly every bodily organ. More than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking. Secondhand smoke is also dangerous to both adults and children.



Smoking traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes, and smokeless tobacco can all cause health problems. Smoking makes it more likely that a person will have tooth decay, gum disease, oral cancer, and poor birth outcomes. It also causes stained teeth, bad breath, and reduced ability to taste and smell.

Not smoking or quitting smoking is important for overall health, including oral health. When a smoker quits, it improves their health and quality of life. It also improves the health and quality of life of those around them, especially young children.

Explore this [website](#) to find out about different [ways to quit smoking](#).

Article Source: [HeadStart.gov](#)

Science Exploration!

As Spring has sprung, many children and families want to get outside. Here are some STEM- influenced (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math) activities that will encourage your child's curiosity in an educational, surprising, and fun way.



Insect Safari

Materials: Container to put insects in, magnifying glass, and a shovel/spoon

Activity: Explore and go on an insect safari in your own backyard, garden, flower bed, grassy area, or anywhere else where insects may live. Talk to your child about how beneficial pollination is to keep plants and vegetables healthy and thriving. Have your child act like one of the insects you find.

Sink or Float

Materials: Objects around the house, natural objects found outside, and a big container filled with water or a water table

Activity: Fill the water table/container with water. Have your child predict if the object they are "testing" will sink or float. Use objects of different weights, sizes, shapes, and materials. Have fun exploring and discussing what happens to each object when it is placed in the water.

Animal and Nature Yoga

Materials: Open space and a blanket or yoga mat

Activity: Yoga is a great way to exercise, release tension and stress, and encourage physical development. With your child, think of animals and objects in nature and position yourselves in that yoga pose. Some examples are cat, downward dog, lizard, tree, mountain, and the sun.

Article Credit: [NLI | Natural Learning Initiative](#)

Visit ELRC Region 11

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