



Community Services for Children Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12 August 2026

Serving Carbon, Lackawanna, Monroe, Pike, Wayne and Susquehanna Counties

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Region 12 News

The ELRC offices will be closed on Monday, September 7, 2026 for Labor Day. We will reopen on Tuesday, September 8th.



Child Care Works Reminders *School Age Schedules*

If your child is entering Kindergarten or returning to school and will need before and/or after school care, please remember to touch base with your Family Specialist to report any changes to your child's schedule.



Mobile Community Days

ELRC staff are out in the community to meet with families at our mobile site locations. The mobile sites allow families to meet with family specialists in locations that may be more convenient for them.



Please stop by to obtain information on the Child Care Works program, pick up/drop off applications, or to receive assistance in finding resources in your local community.

Click [here](#) for upcoming dates and locations.
We look forward to seeing you there!



Weekly Meal Boxes

Free WEEKLY meal boxes for children 1–18 years old are being provided by Sun Meal Kids at various locations throughout Northeast Pennsylvania.

Fresh, delicious meal packages for children who are at home and not receiving meals in camp or from another site are eligible. There are no income nor registration requirements. Each box contains 5-7 servings of breakfast and lunch for each child.

- Click [here](#) for all locations
- Click [here](#) for the Stroudsburg flyer
- Click [here](#) for the Penn Valley Ecumenical Network (PVEN) flyer

ESL to Medical Assistant Training

The Johnson College ESL to Medical Assistant training program provides a comprehensive training program of 400-hour, non-credit, certificate course that includes 140 hours of ESL training with a focus in the medical field for learners with English language instruction in addition to Certified Clinical Medical Assistant Training. Those that complete the program will be eligible to sit for the NHA CCMA exam.



- Click [here](#) for more information.

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:



DID YOU KNOW?

Children who receive early childhood education are 25% more likely to graduate high school and four times more likely to complete a college education.

Enroll Now for PA Pre-K Counts

Quality pre-kindergarten can give your child a strong start in school and in life. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides free half-day or full-day pre-kindergarten for at-risk children throughout Pennsylvania.

Children and their guardians must meet the following requirements to be eligible for the PA Pre-K Counts program:

1. They must be residents of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
2. They must meet the income eligibility requirements of at or below 300% of the federal poverty level for their family size
3. The child must be between the age of 3 and younger than the Kindergarten entry age for the district in which they reside.

Once these eligibility requirements are met, enrollment procedures are based on local community needs. These procedures may contain other considerations for enrollment, such as diagnosed disabilities or developmental delays, English as a second language, or any other factor that the program deems as a priority to ensure that their communities' needs are being served.

There are PA Pre-K Counts classrooms in many Pennsylvania counties. To find PA Pre-K Counts programs near you, contact your local family specialist and they can help you locate local PA Pre-K Counts programs. For more information, visit www.raiseyourstar.org.

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 Erin Barron, a nurse with 20 years' experience, who discusses car seat safety. Click [here](#) to listen.



Child Development



Why Play Is the Heart of Learning

When many people think about learning, they picture children sitting at tables practicing letters, numbers, or worksheets. In high-quality early childhood programs, however, some of the most important learning happens during play.

Play is much more than having fun—it is how young children make sense of the world around them. While children build with blocks, create art, explore outdoors, or pretend to run a restaurant, they are developing the skills they need for success in school and in life.

Here are just a few of the important skills children build through play:

Language and Communication

Children learn new vocabulary, practice conversations, ask questions, and express their ideas while interacting with teachers and friends.

Problem-Solving Skills

Whether building a tower that keeps falling or figuring out how to share materials, children learn to think critically, test solutions, and persevere.

Social-Emotional Development

Playing with others teaches children how to cooperate, take turns, solve conflicts, manage emotions, and develop empathy.

Early Math and Science Concepts

Measuring ingredients in pretend cooking, sorting objects, counting blocks, observing insects, and experimenting with water all introduce important math and science skills.

Physical Development

Running, climbing, drawing, cutting, and manipulating small objects strengthen both large and small muscles needed for everyday tasks and future writing.

High-quality early childhood programs don't simply let children "play." Teachers carefully plan learning experiences, observe children's interests, ask thoughtful questions, and introduce new challenges that extend learning. This intentional teaching helps children build confidence while encouraging curiosity and creativity.

Image Credit: [Raw Pixel](#)

Resource & Referral

Pennie's 2027 Open Enrollment

November 1 to January 15



Pennie offers health coverage from the top health insurance companies in Pennsylvania. You can also get personalized help from a Pennie-certified professional at no cost to you. The open enrollment period is Nov. 1, 2026, to Jan. 15, 2027.

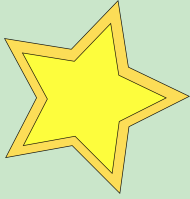
You must enroll during the open enrollment period to have coverage for the year. If you have a qualifying life event, such as loss of health coverage, marriage, change of residence, or many others, you can enroll during a special enrollment period.

How to enroll?

1. Preview. Use the plan comparison tool, see plans in your area and within your budget.
2. Apply. Gather your household information and visit the shopping checklist at pennie.com/learn/how-to-enroll.
3. Shop. Filter and compare health plans by needs and cost.
4. Pay. Your coverage will not begin until you pay your first month's premium. For most health plans, you can make your first payment at the same time that you enroll.

Enrollees can find in-person support and schedule an appointment at pennie.com/find-local-help.

Family Promise



Family Promise prevents and ends homelessness for families with children and helps them achieve sustainable independence through community-based response.

Family Promise delivers innovative solutions for family homelessness including prevention, shelter, stabilization, and housing services. They have served more than 1 million family members for more than 30 years.

There is a severe shortage of affordable housing in America, worsening by rising rents and low wages. With little or no safety net, one unforeseen expense or emergency can lead to family homelessness. Family Promise envisions a nation where every family has a home, a livelihood, and the chance to build a better future.

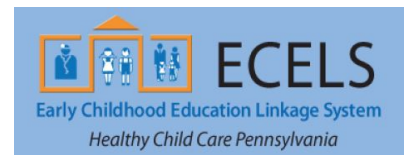
For more information, click [here](#).

Source: [Family Promise](#)

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.



National Immunization Awareness Month

August is **National Immunization Awareness Month**. It serves as a perfect reminder to check in with your pediatrician and make sure your children are protected against preventable diseases before the start of a new school year.

Why On-Time Vaccination Matters

Vaccines are one of the safest and most effective ways to protect your child's health. They work by teaching your child's immune system how to fight off dangerous germs safely.

1. **School Readiness:** Schools and childcare centers require specific vaccines to prevent outbreaks of highly contagious illnesses like measles, mumps, and whooping cough.
2. **Community Protection:** When your child is vaccinated, they also help protect classmates, teachers, and family members who may have weakened immune systems or cannot be vaccinated themselves.
3. **Long-Term Health:** Staying on schedule ensures your child builds strong immunity early in life, preventing serious medical complications down the road.

What Vaccines Does Your Child Need?

Vaccine requirements change as your child grows. Here is a quick guide to what your family might need this season:

- **Infants and Toddlers (Ages 0–4):** Protection against chickenpox, measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), and hepatitis.
- **Young Children (Ages 4–6):** Booster shots for DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis), polio, MMR, and chickenpox before starting kindergarten.
- **Pre-Teens and Teens (Ages 11–12 & 16):** Crucial updates including the Tdap booster, Meningococcal vaccines, and the HPV vaccine series.
- **Everyone (6 Months and Older):** An annual flu vaccine and updated respiratory protections heading into the fall.

3 Tips for a Stress-Free Doctor's Visit

Medical appointments can sometimes cause anxiety for young children. Use these simple strategies to make the visit easier for everyone:

1. **Be Honest but Calm:** Explain that shots are quick pinches that keep our bodies strong and healthy.
2. **Bring a Comfort Item:** Let your child hold a favorite stuffed animal, blanket, or toy during the appointment.
3. **Distract and Comfort:** Use deep breathing, sing a favorite song, or use a colorful book to keep their eyes away from the needle. Give them a big hug as soon as it is over!

Click [here](#) for more information on child vaccinations.

Oral Health

First Aid for a Child's Oral Injuries

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Injuries to the head, face, and mouth are common in young children. Even when adults do their best to keep children safe, oral injuries can happen. Most oral injuries happen when young children are learning to walk. The top front teeth are injured most often.

Click [here](#) to download and print the article.



Tips to help you know what to do for common oral injuries:

- **Tongue or lip injured.** Clean the injured area. Press a clean washcloth on it to stop bleeding. Keep the child's head up and facing forward to prevent choking. Put ice, wrapped in a clean washcloth, on the area to reduce swelling. If bleeding doesn't stop after 30 minutes, the child should be taken to see a dentist or doctor right away. If the dentist or doctor is not available, the child should be taken to the nearest urgent care center.
- **Tooth chipped or cracked.** Clean the injured area. The child's dentist or an urgent care center should be contacted right away. Have the child rinse with water, if possible. If there is bleeding, press a clean washcloth on the gum around the tooth to stop it.
- **Tooth knocked out.** The child's dentist should be contacted right away. Do not try to put a baby tooth back into the mouth. Clean the injured area. If there is bleeding, have the child bite on the area with a clean washcloth for 15 to 30 minutes to stop it.
- **Tooth knocked loose, moved, or pushed into gum.** If a child's tooth has been knocked loose, moved forward or backward, or pushed into the gum, the child's dentist or an urgent care center should be contacted right away. Have

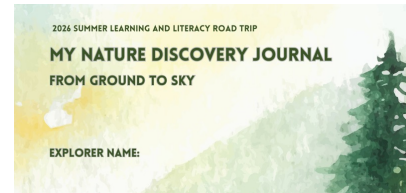
- the child rinse with water, if possible. Press a clean washcloth on the gum around the tooth to stop bleeding.
- Toothache. If a child has a toothache, it is likely that the tooth has a cavity. The child needs a dental appointment as soon as possible to find out what the problem is and get treatment.

Source: [Giving First Aid for Your Child's Oral Injuries](#)

Family Engagement

Learning & Literacy Road Trip

Summer is a great time for a family road trip! PA's Promise for Children is excited to welcome families to the 2026 Summer Learning and Literacy Road Trip. This year's theme is 'From Ground to Sky' and encourages children to explore the natural world all around them, from the rocks beneath their feet to the native trees reaching high into the sky across Pennsylvania. A nature journal is available to download and encourages children to look closely, ask questions, and discover how nature connects to their everyday lives. There is also a map that highlights special areas in Pennsylvania to find native rocks and trees. You and your child can learn side by side, slowing down, and enjoying simple moments in nature. The activities can be enjoyed in your back yard, the local park, or during a road trip!



Click [here](#) to learn more and download the journal.

Visit ELRC Region 12

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Connect with us



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