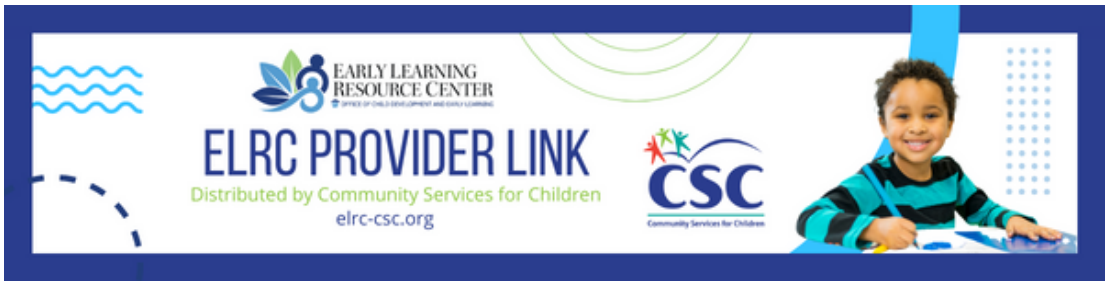


Community Services for Children

Provider Link Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12 October 2026

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

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

The ELRC offices will be closed on Monday October 12th for Indigenous Peoples Day. We look forward to seeing many of you at the ELRC conference!

Region 12 Updates

Region 12 Provider Supports

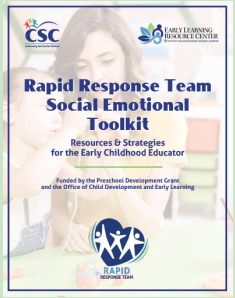
Director's Network Meeting
Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 1pm
This month we will discuss the Child Care Staff Recruitment and Retention Grant. This is a great opportunity to ask questions, so you understand how to process these funds within your program.

- **Director Network flyer - October**

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 support needed. Click **here** to view this month's calendar.

RRT Toolkit Training
It is our goal to have at least one person from each program attend this training opportunity. You will receive one RRT Toolkit per program. It comes with resources you can use in your center to support teachers who are supporting your children through difficult behaviors. See the upcoming dates below.

Rapid Response Team Toolkit
Free Professional Development



All Region 12 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 Fall 2026. Registration required on the PD Registry.

Tuesday, October 20, 2026, 12:00pm - 2:00pm
ELRC Region 12 Office
820 S. Washington Ave. 1st Floor
Scranton, PA
Event ID 406141

Wednesday, October 28, 2026, 1:00pm-3:00pm
Hughes Main Library
1002 North 9th Street
Stroudsburg, PA 18360
Event ID 404213

Rapid Response Team

Update for the Rapid Response Team

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.

Community of Practice

Monthly Communities of Practice are available to all program leadership and staff. These 30-minute sessions are held via Microsoft Teams and focus on helping program staff effectively utilize resources to strengthen the social and emotional

climate of their classrooms using the Rapid Response Team Social Emotional Toolkit.

Join us this month to discuss problem solving and how providing choices can reduce children's challenging behaviors. CoP will be held on October 15th at 1:00 pm.

Click **here** and scroll down to the Community of Practice chart for the link as well as upcoming sessions!

Good Things are Happening

If you would like ELRC staff to visit your program, please contact your Quality Coach and we might just drop in! Highlighting programs in our newsletter can be a great way to initiate collaboration with each other. If you are having a special event or would just like for the ELRC to be a part of a “day in the life” at your center, we would love to visit. We can take photos and share our experiences in our Provider Link newsletter. We look forward to engaging with you and your staff!

ELRC Updates

STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Awards!

Keystone STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Award acceptance letters have been sent to all eligible STAR 2, 3 & 4 providers. The intent of the award is to improve, support, and recognize the quality of Pennsylvania’s early learning and school-age programs that are invested in the Keystone STARS Program.

Providers in ELRC Regions 11,12, 13, 14 & 16 were emailed their acceptance letter. If you are expecting a letter but did not receive it, please reach out to your Quality Coach.

Providers should complete their acceptance letter and email back to **elrc-ksgrants@cscinc.org**. All acceptance letters must be returned by November 30, 2026.

For full details, please see the **ELRC 26-03: 2026-27 Keystone STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Awards - The Pennsylvania Key**. This Announcement contains important information regarding general provider eligibility requirements, a policy eligibility exception for STAR 1 programs, special consideration for STAR 2 and 3 programs, award amounts, allowable expenses, ineligible expenses, processes and a timeline.

2026 ELRC Fall Conference

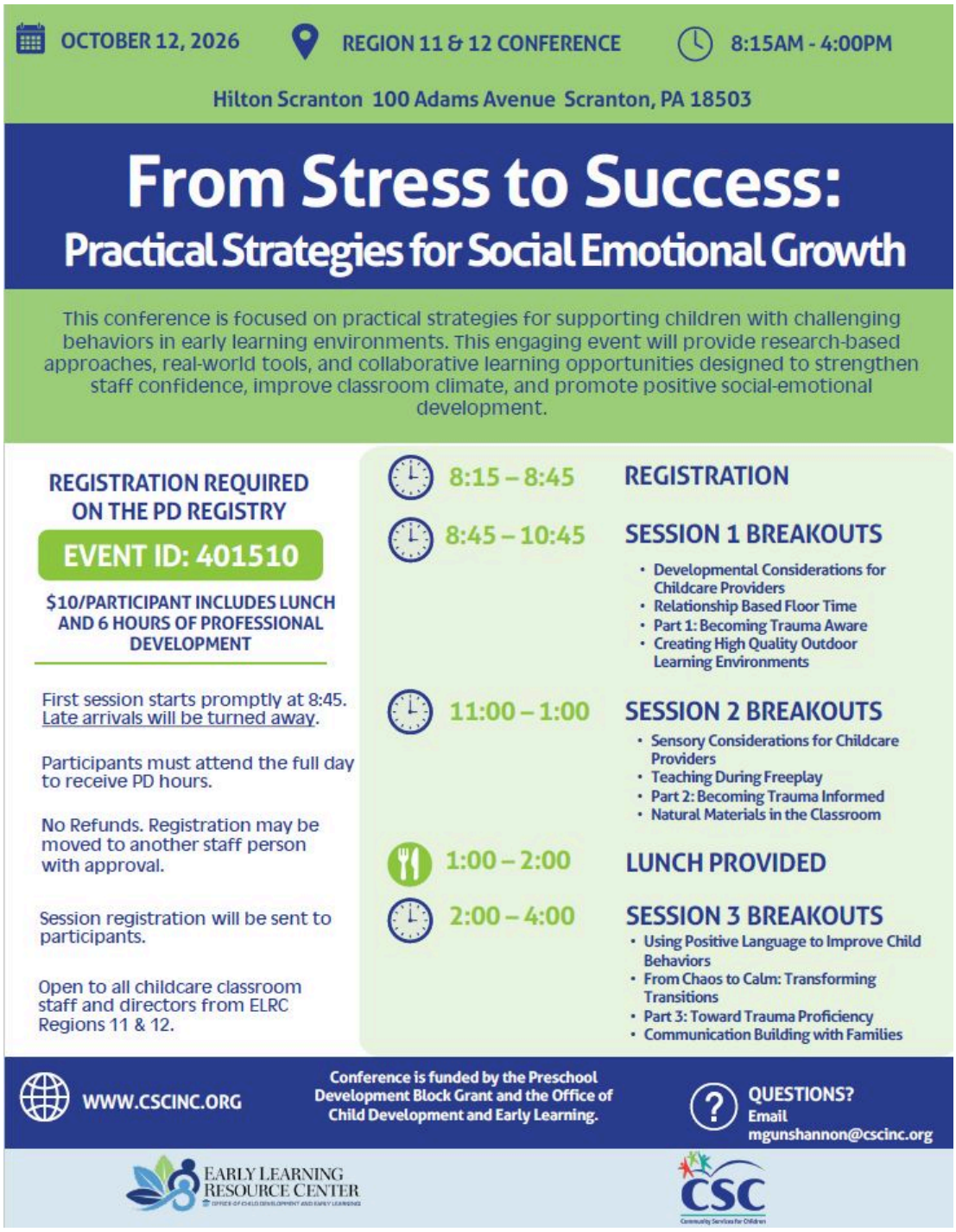
Registration is now closed for the Fall 2026 conference titled *"From Stress to Success: Practical Strategies for Social Emotional Growth"*.

For those who are attending, registration will begin at 8:15 and the first session begins promptly at 8:45 am. Reminder that participants must attend the full day in order to receive PD credit hours.

All registrants have received an email to select breakout sessions. Selections are first come, first served and must be completed by 10/5/26. If you have not received the email, please reach out to your Quality Coach.

Monday October 12,2026
8:15 AM - 4:00 PM

Hilton Scranton
100 Adams Ave
Scranton, PA 18503



CCW Reminders

- Please remember to review your invoice each month before submitting. Verify that all children who are

enrolled are appearing on your invoice **and** that children who have left the program, have been removed. Report any changes to your Provider Specialist.

- Please let your Provider Specialist know when there are changes to a child's enrollment. If you notice a pattern of absences, discuss with the family to see if an adjustment to their schedule is needed, rather than adding to their 40-day absence count.

- If you are a new director and would like any support with Child Care Works, reach out to your Provider Specialist or Quality Coach. They are happy to schedule a meeting with you to review processes and answer any questions you may have.

Payment Schedule 2026-2027
The CCW Payment schedule for 2026-2027 has been released. Please download a copy and take note of invoice due dates and payment dates.
2026-2027 Payment Schedule

Get to Know Your Child Care Works Provider Agreement
Registration Fees

In the Certified Provider Agreement, Article III. Conditions of the Agreement, Section (a) Payment Rates, # 8 states:

> *8) Provider will receive a registration fee for each new enrollment, in the amount determined by OCDEL, regardless if the provider charges private pay families a registration fee. If a provider does charge private pay families a registration fee, and the fee is greater than the amount OCDEL pays, providers cannot charge CCW families the difference.*

This means that providers are not allowed to charge CCW families an additional registration fee or the difference between their programs registration fee and the registration fee that is received from the ELRC.

Rapid Response Team Tip of the Month
Supporting Social-Emotional Well-Being from the Start

The beginning of the school year is an important time to build connections, establish a sense of belonging, and help children feel safe and comfortable in their new classroom environment. The following activities offer simple ways educators can support children as they adjust to new routines, build relationships with peers and adults, express their feelings, and develop a strong classroom community from the start.

Classroom and Educator Activities
- Morning Meetings: Start the day with quick check-ins, greetings, or asking students to share one word about how they feel.
- Talk About Feelings: Ask open-ended questions like "What are you excited about?" or "Is anything making you nervous?" and validate all emotions.
- Co-Create Class Rules: Involve students in brainstorming community values and rules so they feel empowered and connected.
- Connection Games: Use low-prep icebreakers like Human Bingo, Name Web with yarn, or Emotion Charades to build peer comfort. Plan activities like peer painting, peer sharing, or peer challenges.

- Act It Out: Use role-playing or pretend play to practice social scenarios like entering the classroom, finding a lunch table, solving a peer conflict, or asking a peer to play.
- Create a Calm-Down Toolbox: Teach deep breathing, positive self-talk, and provide opportunities to practice self-regulation.

References:
https://www.thepathway2success.com/30-social-emotional-learning-activities-for-back-to-school/
https://casel.org/blog/3-back-to-school-sel-tips-for-families/

Supports for Spanish Providers

First Up
Champions for Early Education

Sept. 15th – Oct. 15th is Hispanic Heritage Month.
Move beyond simply celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with food, flags, or famous people. Teachers can create opportunities for children, families, and educators to see Hispanic and Latino cultures as part of everyday learning and community life, as well as other cultures represented in the classrooms. Consider:

- Inviting children and families to share something meaningful about their own family traditions during a show and tell.
- Invite families into the classrooms to read a book, teach a traditional game, etc. Explore books and music related to the Hispanic culture.
- Have conversations around identity and diversity.

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 August but will run throughout the year. Click on the flyer below to register.

Module 1 - Budgets, Projections & Planning
January 12 - 9:30-11:30 am
January 23 - 10:00 - noon

Module 2 - Financial Reports & Internal Controls
October 12 - 1:00-3:00 pm
January 19 - 9:30-11:30 am

Module 3- Marketing Your Program
November 16 - 12:00-3:00 pm
January 26 - 9:30-12:30

Module 4- Recruiting and Retaining Staff
December 16, 12:00-3:00 pm
February 2 - 9:30-12:30

For future module offerings, click on this flyer

2026-2027 Business Practice Registration Flyer

Scam Targeting Child Care

It has been recently reported to the ELRC, that some childcare providers have been receiving emails from families requesting temporary enrollment for their child. They will pay upfront but are unwilling to provider child information.

What has been reported, is they will send a check that is over the amount and ask the provider to send the overage back.

See this article for examples of this scam: **Fake check scam targets childcare providers**.

Protect yourself. If something feels suspicious, ask more questions, require meeting the family in person and do not send wire transfers or cryptocurrency.

Keystone STARS Tip of the Month
Family Handbooks

The purpose of a family handbook is to share the policies and procedures of your program with the families that you serve. It's also an opportunity to share your program's strengths and to provide clear expectations so that families can determine if your program will be a good fit for their child.

Family handbooks should be reviewed at least annually and be revised whenever necessary. Requesting input from staff can also be helpful when updating your handbook. They may be aware of trends or concerns that could be addressed with updated policies. If your handbook has been created electronically it can easily be updated and sent out to your families.

Your family handbook is a reflection of your business, your educational philosophy and your daily policies and procedures. It provides clear communication between families, staff and the director and should be updated as needed. If you are looking for a sample handbook or want to know what policies should be included in your handbook, contact your Quality Coach who will provide a variety of samples and resources.

Free Lesson Plans from Best Day Ever!

Back-to-school planning just got easier! Our Fall 2026 Best Day Ever! lesson plans are here, with brand-new themes and refreshed favorites ready for after school, school holidays, in-service days, and more.

Created by certified teachers and tested with real students, Best Day Ever! offers ready-to-use, standards-aligned programming that keeps kids engaged while saving you valuable planning time. And for Pennsylvania providers, they're available at NO COST!

This release includes:

- 10 After School lesson plans – 5 brand-new + 5 updated favorites
- 10 Kids' Day Out lesson plans – 6 brand-new + 4 updated favorites

- Complete schedules, materials lists, activity pages, and hands-on fun!

These lesson plans are written and tested by teachers at The Learning Lamp, a leading out-of-school-time education provider in Pennsylvania. They are available at NO COST through January 2027.

Click **here** to access the plans.

School Age Credential Program

Spring 2027

A School Age credential is being offered by Northampton Community College beginning in the Spring 2027. The SAPC provides 9 total credit hours in 3 courses. All instruction is over TEAMS one night a week in the evenings.

Click **here** to learn more about this opportunity!

October is Farm to ECE Month

Farm to ECE strategies and activities for early childhood environments focus on:

- Using local food — buying or using locally sourced foods in meals and snacks
- Gardening — offering hands-on opportunities for growing and caring for plants
- Food, nutrition, and agriculture education — teaching about healthy foods, where food comes from, and how it grows

The early years are an important time for forming taste preferences and building healthy eating habits. Farm to ECE offers several benefits, including:

- Healthier eating habits — Farm to ECE encourages healthy eating habits by giving children fresh, locally sourced foods. Children are more likely to try foods they have helped grow, clean, or prepare. It's a great way to encourage them to eat more nutritious foods.
- Stronger communities — Buying local food supports farmers and makes your community food system stronger. It also gives families and staff information about where to get local food in their community. Buying locally often creates a sense of belonging, especially for familiar or traditional foods that are part of children's cultures.
- Mental wellness — Gardening can increase pride, self-confidence, and a sense of accomplishment. Garden spaces can also reduce stress, improve focus, provide teaching opportunities, build social connections, and support emotional regulation for children and staff.

Here are some tips to build your farm to ECE program:

- Use **state resources** to learn more about farm to ECE and how it fits with your program's goals. Find tools and guidance for finding activities that fit into your program activities.
- Connect with **Master Gardener programs**, cooperative extensions at universities, and local farmer associations for expert advice and support.
- Start small and build slowly. Choose one or two activities. For example, start with small container gardens or introduce locally grown fruits and vegetables with meals.

- Include **age-appropriate garden activities**, from infant sensory exploration to preschool projects.

Resources to Learn More
· **Farm to ECE: Getting Started**
· **Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings**

Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program

PennAEYC has created a resource for early care and education providers and the families you serve about the Infant and Toddler Early Intervention program, which provides services to children who have or are at risk of developmental delays.

This one-page handout includes valuable information on:

- Eligibility criteria and the enrollment process
- Available services and how they can support child development
- Contact information for referrals and questions

PennAEYC Infant Toddler Early Intervention Handout

Opt In for OCDEL Newsletters

Staying up to date on current provider news is important!
Child care providers should subscribe to OCDEL newsletters to receive statewide updates, certification changes, important announcements, and helpful resources.

We highly recommend subscribing to at least these two newsletters:

- Certification Service News
- PA Early Education News

Providers can sign up on the PA Key website **here**.

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.

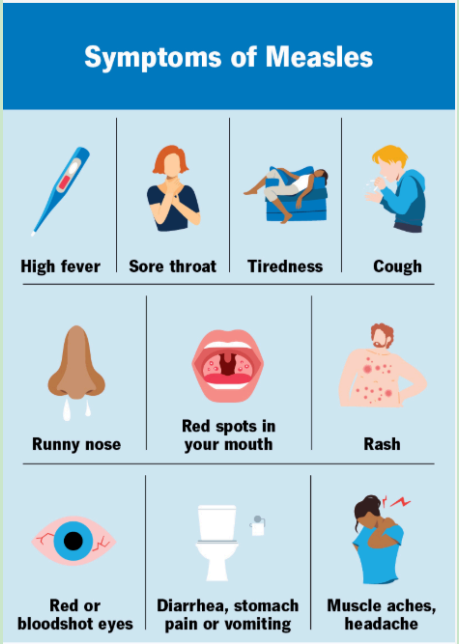
Click **here** to view their newsletter and download the most recent edition.

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**.

Measles Cases

What Providers Need to Know



There are more than 570 confirmed cases of measles across Pennsylvania and child care providers can play a critical role in reducing further spread.

Recommended Policy Measures for Child Care:
Review the immunization status for all children AND talk to staff members/volunteers about their immunization status. Proof of immunity includes:

- Documentation of one or more doses of MMR vaccine;
- Laboratory evidence of immunity (blood test) or laboratory confirmation of measles disease; and
- Birth before 1957. Adults born before 1957 are more likely to have had measles as children and are generally, but not always, considered immune.

Develop a communications strategy for disseminating information about cases occurring in the child care facility setting to the parents, staff, and to the public. Remind families and staff about MMR vaccination, including where it can be accessed, such as primary care providers, urgent care, pharmacies, federally funded health centers, state health centers, and your local health department.

Promote infection control practices, such as respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, frequent handwashing, and disinfect high-touch surfaces. Strongly encourage staff and children to stay home when ill.

Review the signs and symptoms of measles and have procedures in place for handling suspected cases.

- Be watchful for children who may develop a fever and other signs and symptoms of measles.
- Measles starts with symptoms that are common with other diseases: a high fever, runny nose, cough, red/watery eyes, and sore throat.
- Isolate symptomatic individuals in a designated area until they can be picked up.
- Instruct families of ill children to call ahead to their health care provider or urgent care center before arrival.

Exclude individuals confirmed with measles until four days after rash onset. Inform families of unvaccinated children and unvaccinated staff of the exposure and that they may need to stay home for up to 21 days after their last exposure to someone who has had measles. If a child care attendee is exposed to measles and receives a dose of MMR vaccine within 72 hours after their initial exposure, the child may return to child care and other activities.

If a Measles Case Occurs:
Notify authorities immediately. Contact your local health department or the PA Department of Health at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258).

Click **here** to read more information on what you can do to protect the children and families in your care.

Information taken from OCDEL Certification email 9/9/26

Oral Health Tip
Setting Oral Health Goals

Why is setting goals important? Goal setting can help you create new behaviors. It can also allow you to measure your progress. Finally, it can give you the motivation to maintain good oral health habits.

- Good oral health habits include:
- Regular dental visits and treatment
- Healthy snacks
- Brush with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day
- No sugary beverages
- No bottle for bed
- Water or milk only in sippy cups
- Drink tap water
- Avoid or limit junk food and candy
- Limit sugar and consider sugar substitutes

Last thing to touch teeth before bed is toothbrush with fluorinated toothpaste
Click **here** for an infographic that you can share with families to help them set and meet oral health goals.

Article Credit: **Home - Kids Smiles**

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 12

Community Services for Children |**elrc12@cscinc.org**| **www.cscinc.org**

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Community Services for Children | 1520 Hanover Ave | Allentown, PA 18109 US

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