Community Services for Children

Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 12 October 2026

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

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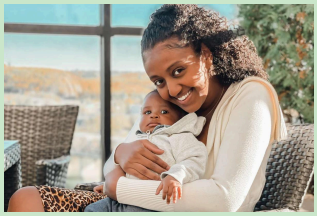
Region 12 News

Child Care Works Reminder



As a friendly reminder, families are allowed up to 40-days of absence per year (July 1- June 30) and this includes children who only attend care before and after school hours. Please continue to reach out to your family specialist as soon as you become aware that your child(ren) will be absent from care for five consecutive scheduled days.

If you should encounter any need for schedule changes, like sports or other seasonal activities, please reach out to your Family Specialist to let them know.

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. Please see this **flyer** for upcoming dates and locations. We look forward to seeing you there!

Ditch the Diapers

Discover a joyful, inclusive approach to toilet training for individuals of all ages, abilities, and communication styles. This supportive series helps families build confidence, celebrate every milestone, and navigate each step at their own pace. Together, we can make potty time a positive and encouraging experience!

Click **here** for more information.

Hope for Veterans Program

The Hope for Veterans Program of Community Hope is a program designed to help veterans overcome challenges such as homelessness, substance use, and mental health concerns in a safe and supportive environment. The program connects veterans with VA services and community resources while providing individual and group counseling, financial counseling, and other supportive services to help them achieve stability and improve their overall well-being.

- **Community Hope flyer**

Employment Readiness Work Group

Are you having trouble finding or keeping a job? Do you have a criminal record or other barriers that make employment more challenging?

Outreach can help you build job-readiness skills, strengthen your resume, prepare for interviews, and overcome employment barriers.

Supports are available on Mondays from 11:00 AM–12:00 PM at the LEAD Center at Outreach. You can reach them at 570-703-0049 or email **shoemaker@outreachworks.org**.

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

Maintaining Routines at Home

Routines not only benefit adults, they can also benefit children and play a vital role in their development. Having a set routine can allow children to feel safe, secure, and in control of their environment. Through the consistency of a routine, children gain a sense of comfort in their world and can prevent undesirable behaviors.

When making a routine for home feel free to include your child. Give your child simple choices such as what story you will read before bed or what snack they pack for lunch. This will help them be excited for the day and give them a sense of control. Be sure to be:

1. Flexible if needed. Not every routine will be followed every day. Leaving room for flexibility allows children to expect changes in life.
2. Keep it simple.
3. Keep each morning/evening as similar as possible. Be consistent.

"There is no perfect routine for every family. Each household is different and your routine will be based on many factors – number of children, number of caregivers, whether parents work and if they have flexible hours. Your routine is all about finding what works for your family." Dr. Natalie Escalante

Find what works for your family! For more information, please visit:
https://www.childrens.com/
The Importance of Schedules and Routines | HeadStart.gov

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)

DID YOU KNOW?

Language develops in a baby's brain before they can talk -- reading and speaking to your child early is important!

Child Development

How Teachers Observe to Support Learning

Have you ever wondered how teachers know when your child is ready for a new challenge or needs a little extra support? One of the most valuable tools teachers use is observation.

Observation is simply the process of watching, listening, and documenting what children do during their everyday activities. Rather than relying on tests or worksheets, teachers at quality early childhood programs gather information by watching children play, interact with others, solve problems, and explore their environment. These observations help teachers understand each child's unique strengths, interests, and developmental progress.

Observation Happens Throughout the Day
Teachers are constantly learning about children during everyday routines. They observe children as they:

- Build with blocks and solve problems.
- Talk with friends during dramatic play.
- Explore art materials and express creativity.

- Count objects and recognize patterns.
- Listen to stories and ask questions.
- Play outside and develop physical skills.
- Work through challenges and manage emotions.

Each observation provides valuable information that helps teachers better understand how children learn and grow.

Why Observation Matters

Observation allows teachers to make thoughtful decisions about each child's learning experience. Instead of expecting every child to learn in the same way or at the same pace, teachers use observations to individualize instruction.

Through observation, teachers can:

- Plan activities based on children's interests.
- Introduce new skills when children are ready.
- Identify areas where additional support may be helpful.
- Celebrate developmental milestones and accomplishments.
- Encourage children's strengths while building new skills.
- Create meaningful learning experiences that are engaging and developmentally appropriate.

This individualized approach helps every child experience success and develop confidence as a learner.

Growing Together

Every child develops at their own pace, and observation helps teachers meet children where they are. By carefully observing children's play, conversations, and everyday experiences, teachers can create learning opportunities that inspire curiosity, build confidence, and support continued growth.

Resource & Referral

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Everyone faces difficult moments, and you do not need to be in a major crisis to ask for help. You can contact 988 if you are experiencing anxiety, grief, loneliness, trouble sleeping, stress, concern about someone you love, or simply a hard day. Whatever the reason, support is available.

The free and confidential 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call or text 988, or chat online whenever you need someone to talk to.

Learn more or chat online at www.pa.gov/988.

Sharing Resources Through COMPASS

Are you aware of all the community resources that are available through COMPASS? COMPASS is an online tool for Pennsylvanians to access many health and human service programs and manage benefit information. The COMPASS website is a fast and easy way to learn about benefits, check on the eligibility requirements, apply for benefits and re-apply when it is time for renewal.

The website offers resources such as Health Care, Food and Nutrition, Home and Community Based Services and Child Care Works, just to name a few.

For more information, you can go to the COMPASS website by clicking the link below. **www.compass.state.pa.us**

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.

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 healthy oral health habits.
Healthy 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 to help you set and meet healthy oral health goals.

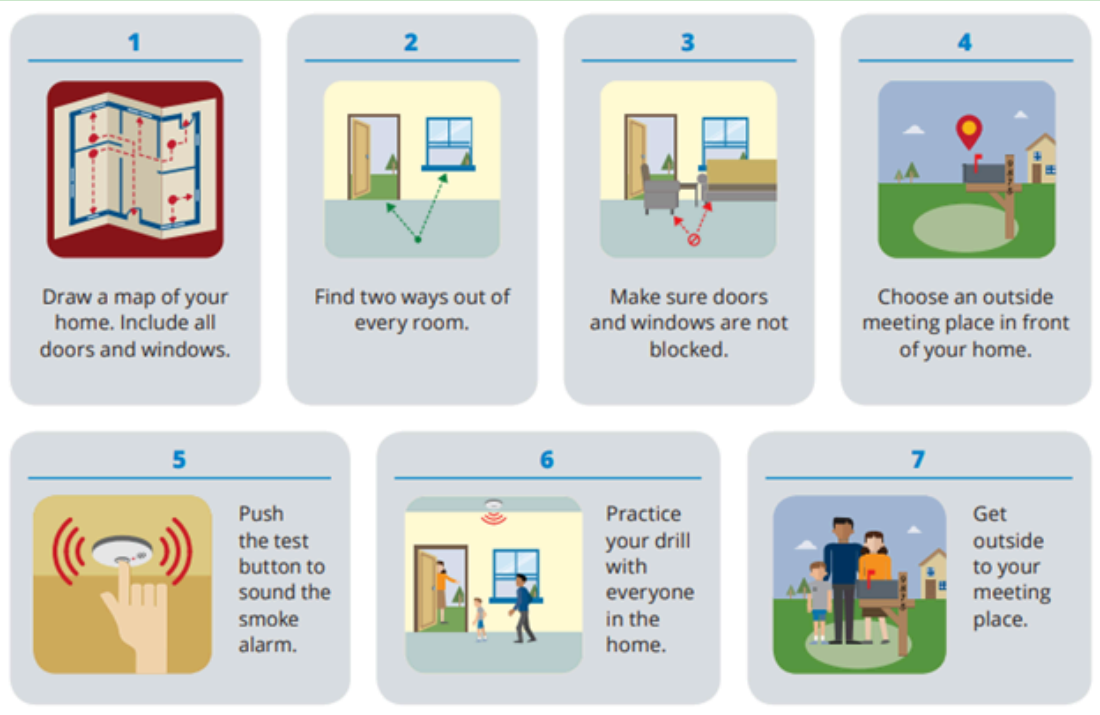
Article Credit: ***Home - Kids Smiles***

Family Fire Escape Plan

Creating and practicing a home fire escape plan is simple. Follow the steps below to make sure everyone in your home is prepared and knows what to do in case of a home fire.

- Make a written escape plan and practice at least twice a year. Draw a map of your home including doors and windows. You should have two ways out of every room and two ways out of your house. Choose a meeting place a safe distance from your home. Practice getting out in less than 2 minutes.
- Make sure you have smoke alarms on every level of your home and in each bedroom. Test them twice a year. Test the alarms with your children so they learn what they sound like.

For more information visit the **Ready.gov**. You can also download this **Activity Guide** for fun activities and ideas to help you practice fire safety skills with your children.



Healthy Habits for a Happy Fall

As the weather gets cooler and children spend more time indoors, fall often brings an increase in colds, coughs, and other illnesses. A few simple habits can help keep children, families, and our early learning community healthy this season!

Wash, wash, wash those hands!
Handwashing is one of the best ways to help prevent the spread of germs. Help children practice washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds—especially after using the bathroom, after blowing their nose, before eating, and after coming home from school or child care.

Cover coughs and sneeze
Teach children to cough or sneeze into their elbow rather than their hands. If they use a tissue, encourage them to throw it away and wash their hands afterward.

Know when your child needs a sick day
If your child isn't feeling well, check your program's illness policy before sending them to care. Keeping children home when illness prevents them from comfortably participating in their normal activities—or when they may spread illness to others—helps protect children and educators.

Support healthy routines
Good sleep, nutritious foods, plenty of water, and active play all support children's overall health. Even as temperatures drop, outdoor play is still important! Dress children in layers so they can comfortably enjoy fresh air and movement.

Practice healthy habits together
Young children learn by watching the adults around them. When families and educators model handwashing, covering coughs, and taking care of their bodies, these healthy habits become part of children's everyday routines.
Here's to a healthy, happy October!

Learn More:
• CDC – Hand Hygiene in Schools and Early Care and Education Settings
• American Academy of Pediatrics/HealthyChildren.org – When to Keep Your Child Home From Child Care
• Pennsylvania Department of Health – Child Care & Respiratory Illness Guidance

Family Engagement

Share Your Family Engagement Story

Meaningful family engagement happens every day, and the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) wants to hear your story! Family engagement refers to the ongoing partnership between families and professionals, in which families' strengths, knowledge, experiences, and voices are valued to support their children and families and to strengthen programs, communities, and the broader early childhood system.

In celebration of November's National Family Engagement Month, OCDEL invites families to share a brief story about meaningful family engagement.

OCDEL welcomes stories that highlight partnerships happening in many different places and ways, including:

- In the home, as families and professionals work together to support children and family goals
- In early childhood programs and services, where families and professionals partner in planning, learning, and decision-making
- In communities and systems, where family voices and leadership help shape programs, services, policies, and practices
- Through family engagement and leadership initiatives, such as workshops, trainings, Parent Cafés, advisory groups, peer support opportunities, and other activities that help families build leadership skills, connect with other families, and contribute to positive change in their communities and systems.
- Stories might highlight Family Voice & Leadership, Family-Professional Partnerships, Systems Change & Impact, or Innovation & Success.

Selected stories will be featured throughout November to celebrate families and professionals working together, elevate varied family experiences, and inspire meaningful family engagement and leadership across Pennsylvania.

Share your story in the format that works best for you! Submissions may be:

- A written story or article of up to 300 words, or
- A 3–5-minute video sharing your experience and the impact of the partnership.

Submission deadline is October 23, 2026. For more information and to submit your story, follow link below:
Share Your Family Engagement Story Survey

Let's Cook Spiced Apple Mug Cake with STEM

Believe it or not, you can expose your child to STEM (**S**cience/**T**echnology/**E**ngineering/**M**ath) while cooking. Make it a learning experience by having your child help you shop for, prepare, and measure ingredients, select the cooking time and temperature, and safely store what you have made. You can also investigate the ingredients and use your senses to explore them. For example: where do apples come from and how do they grow, what color and shape are they, how do they feel when you touch them, what do they smell and taste like, how does it sound when you take a bite, and did cooking them change anything? Here is a fun, easy, and delicious fall recipe you can make and enjoy together.

Ingredients: 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, 2 Tbsp. whole milk, 2 Tbsp. light brown sugar, 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar, 1/4 tsp. vanilla extract, 1/2 cup all-purpose flour, 1/2 tsp. apple pie spice, 1/4 tsp. baking powder, pinch of kosher salt, 1 apple (your choice), vanilla ice cream, to serve, caramel sauce, to serve

Directions:

1. In a 14- to 16-ounce microwave-safe mug, combine the butter, milk, brown and granulated sugars, and vanilla extract. Microwave on high for 45 seconds. Stir with a fork until the butter is melted. Add the flour, apple pie spice, baking powder, and salt and stir with a fork.
2. Chop the apple into small chunks, leaving the skin on. Stir ¾ cup of the chopped apple into the mug cake. Clean off any batter on the insides and rim of the mug.
3. Microwave on high until the top of the cake is set, about 2 minutes. Let cool for 5 to 7 minutes. Top with ice cream and garnish with the remaining chopped apple and a drizzle of caramel sauce. Serve hot.

Tip #1 **How to Keep Apples from Turning Brown**
Tip #2 **How to Store Apples to Keep Them Fresher Longer**

Recipe credit: The Pioneer Women **Spiced Apple Mug Cake Recipe - How to Make Spiced Apple Mug Cake**

Visit ELRC Region 12

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

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