

Community Services for Children

Provider Link Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 14 November 2026

Serving Lehigh & Northampton Counties

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

Please note that the ELRC offices will be closed on Thursday, November 26th & Friday, November 27th for the Thanksgiving holiday.



As we take a moment this time of year to reflect on what we are thankful for, know that everyone from the Early Learning Resource Center appreciates all you do for the children and families in your care. The ECE community continues to serve children and give them a safe place to be nurtured, to learn and to thrive.

Region 14 Updates

Keystone STAR Movements



The following programs have demonstrated their commitment to quality by moving to a higher STAR level from July through September 2026.

Congratulations to the providers who have moved to a STAR 2:

- Learning Blossoms Academy, LLC
- Bold Minds Learning Center
- Tiny Hugs Daycare Corporation
- Morning Day Care
- Palmer Moravian Day School

Congratulations to the providers who have moved to a STAR 3:

- Teddykids Bilingual Home Daycare, LLC
- The Goddard School (Parkland Preschool)

Congratulations to the providers who have moved to a STAR 4:

- Batista Family Daycare
- Loving Life Child Care
- ABC Children's Day Care
- Sweet Home Day Care & Learning Center
- Happy Kidcare, LLC
- Davis Family Daycare

Region 14 Provider Supports

Director's Network

Join us at the Director's Network each month, where we will have time to collaborate with each other, ask questions, share challenges, ask for advice, discuss program success, enhance quality and much more!

Please join us on Tuesday, November 10th, at **10:00 am**. Following the recent release of this year's CQI and CCSRR grants, we'll discuss best practices for submitting grant applications and organizing supporting documents.
Come and take part in the conversation! Click **here** for additional details and the link to the meeting.

Quality Coach Office Days

Are you thinking about moving up in STARS and need some extra assistance or do you need help with your Keystone STARS Renewal or Designation?
Quality Coaches are available to answer questions throughout the week. They are also in the office weekly to meet one-on-one to support you through your STARS journey. Click **here** for dates when your Quality Coach will be in the office. Please don't hesitate to email, call or schedule a time to meet.

Regional Calendar

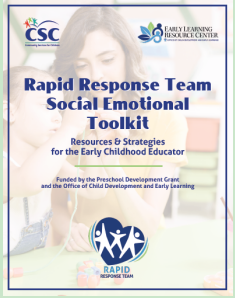
Check out our calendar for a quick reference of all regional support activities and professional development opportunities.

- **Region 14 Calendar – November 2026**

Rapid Response Team Toolkit

Free Professional Development

All Region 14 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.

Monday, November 23, 2026, 1:00pm – 3:00pm
Early Learning Resource Center Region 14
101 North 6th Street
Allentown, PA 18101
Event ID: 404552

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 how supporting self-regulation can reduce children's challenging behaviors. CoP will be held on November 19th at 1:00 pm.

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

2026 ELRC Fall Conference

Thank you to those who attended one of the ELRC Fall conferences. "Potenciar el desarrollo socioemocional y las interacciones positivas" was held at Community Services for Children for Spanish-speaking providers. "The Power of Relationships, Environments & Intentionality" was held at Lehigh University.

Almost 200 teachers and program leadership attended the day. Participants were able to select from breakout sessions that met their needs and everyone left with giveaway items to support their classroom practices.

If you attended the conference but have not yet completed the follow up survey, please do so **here**. Your feedback will help us plan for next year's ECE Conference.



ELRC Region 14 Provider Specialist Team: Your Primary Point of Contact

Your Provider Specialist Team is here to help! As the primary point of contact for all child care providers, we welcome your questions about agreements, payments, as well as case-related topics, including copay delinquencies, enrollment, schedules, and more. Your Provider Specialist will work with the client's Family Specialist to help answer your questions.

Please reach out to your Provider Specialist using the contact information below:

- Susan Ritter – **susanr@cscinc.org** or at 484-274-3852
  (Legal Entities starting with A-F, R)
- Abigail Araujo – **aaraujo@cscinc.org** or at 484-898-8113
  (Legal Entities starting with G-L)
- Damaris Nieves – **dnieves@cscinc.org** or at 484-602-4285
  (Legal Entities starting with M-Q, S-Z)

ELRC Updates

Child Care Staff Retention & Recruitment Grant - DUE 11/30/26



The 2026-2027 CCSRR Application has been released. Completed applications are due to the ELRC no later than **November 30, 2026**.

Community Services for Children will be offering child care providers several information sessions regarding the updated Child Care Staff Retention & Recruitment Grant which was released October 13th. The Child Care Staff Retention and Recruitment program is intended to provide funding to eligible DHS certified child care providers for the sole purpose of staff retention and staff recruitment bonuses.

There have been changes to the eligibility criteria and application requirements since the 2025–2026 grant cycle. We strongly encourage **all providers** to attend an information session before submitting a grant application. Attending a session will help ensure that you understand the updated eligibility requirements and application process.

Please note that **incomplete or inaccurate applications will be declined**.

Sessions will cover:

- Program eligibility
- Staff retention award eligibility
- Required documentation
- Recruitment awards
- Process for application
- Timeline for submission and payment

All sessions are the same content so pick the session that is most convenient for you. Please click on the link below to join:

Wednesday, November 4 ~ 10:00 am
Monday, November 9 ~ 12:00 pm
Wednesday, November 18 ~ 11:30 am

CCSRR Application and Announcement can be found here: **ELRC 26-04: 2026-2027 Child Care Staff Recruitment and Retention Program - The Pennsylvania Key**



STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Awards - DUE 11/30/26

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 it 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.

CCW Reminders



- As we approach the holiday season, please take a moment to review the closures you submitted to ensure they are still correct. If there are any changes or updates, please contact your Provider Specialist.
- Any changes to a child's care schedule should be reported to your Provider Specialist prior to the submission of your invoice.

Co-payment Delinquencies

- It is important to report delinquent CCW co-payments timely to the ELRC. Per Appendix A of the ELRC Certified Provider Agreement, providers must report a delinquent co-payment to the ELRC on the business day following the day the co-payment becomes delinquent. For example, if a co-pay is not paid by Friday for that service week, the delinquency must be reported on your next business day, which is typically Monday.
- Please note, delinquencies can only be reported for co-payments. Delinquencies regarding additional fees your program charges must be handled privately with the family. If you are aware that a family is currently under adverse action, please urge them to resolve this as soon as possible in order to maintain their eligibility and prevent any disruptions in care.
- When delinquent co-pays are resolved, please notify us, or report on Provider Self Service, so we can satisfy the client's adverse action. When families are seeking to transfer enrollments, an ELRC Family Specialist will contact you to verify if that family is current with their co-payment before authorizing the transfer.

Sleep Time

- Parents who work overnight hours may be approved for additional sleep time through CCW. This time allows working parents to have time to sleep while their child is safely in care. Parents may choose to use their sleep time before or after their work hours.

CCW Payment Schedule 2026-2027
Please download a copy and take note of invoice due dates and payment dates.
2026-2027 Payment Schedule



The Environment Rating Scales – R (Revised Editions) are for the Rubbish!

If you are still holding onto revised editions of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS), this message is for you! Revised editions of the ERS are no longer approved by Pennsylvania as program observation instruments for STARS monitoring or movement, or for use in your IAP work with program quality assessors. It's time to clear your shelves of outdated revised editions and save yourself frustration, delays, and extra work by tossing those revised editions and replacing them with the third editions!

It's a simple mistake to make. It would be easy to grab the ERS book you've always used without confirming the full title. Here are a few clues that may be helpful:

· The third editions are spiral-bound at the top.

- The third editions include "Third Edition" under the scale title, but a quicker way to check is to look at the white emblem in the upper right corner.
- The artwork on the cover is the same for the revised and the third editions, but the cover colors are just a little bit different. Checking the color isn't the most helpful way to confirm – the difference is very minor!
- SACERS-U is still the accepted version but be on the lookout for the third edition that the authors promise is coming soon!

How to get a third edition?
Registering for the ITERS-3, ECERS-3, FCCERS-3, and SACERS-U professional development (PD) course is an IAP win-win! The registration fee includes access to the self-paced course AND a copy of the corresponding third edition scale book. Once the PD course is completed, a program can request one free copy of the related "All About" book (currently available for ITERS-3 and ECERS-3). The order form for the third-edition scale book is included in the course handouts. Participants should plan to order and receive their book before starting the course! The "All About" request form is also available in the handouts, but the order will not be processed until course completion has been verified.

Bottom line: Revised editions have had their day. If one is still on your shelf, it's probably time to send it to the rubbish.

Get to Know Your Child Care Works Provider Agreement



Accurately Submitting Invoices for Payment

In *Appendix A-Rules for Participation in the Subsidized Child Care Program* of the Certified Provider Agreement, under section *D-Submitting An Invoice for Payment*, it states:

> "The provider must accurately complete attendance invoices each month and document all absences for children who are not in care. The invoice must be submitted to the ELRC monthly either online or on a form provided by OCDEL. The invoice must include the days of attendance and absence

for each child. For a newly enrolled child, payment will begin on the first day the child attends. If the child is absent on the initial day of scheduled care, payment will not start until the child attends."

"The ELRC may audit providers who utilize the No Change code on a regular basis when completing Attendance Invoices. If the ELRC finds that a provider is not updating monthly attendance invoices, it may lead to termination of the Agreement and referral to the OSIG for fraud investigation."

Providers with seven or more enrollments, who submit three invoices with the No Change box checked for all children within a fiscal year, will receive a letter from the ELRC requiring the provider to verify attendance. Providers who receive this letter are required to verify attendance for the remainder of the fiscal year on invoices which show no children were absent. Failure to submit the required documentation will delay the processing of the invoice for the given month.

Rapid Response Team Tip of the Month

Family-Made Feelings Faces!

November is National Family Engagement Month! What better way to strengthen family partnerships while supporting children's social-emotional development? One fun and interactive strategy is creating a classroom feelings chart using pictures contributed by children and their families.

Invite families to take pictures of their children making different facial expressions, such as happy, sad, frustrated, excited, or worried. Families can also draw feelings faces together! Teachers can use these pictures to create a personalized feelings chart that children can use during morning arrival, daily routines, or when experiencing big emotions.

Why does it work? Recognizing and communicating emotions helps children express their needs, develop self-regulation skills, and reduce challenging behaviors. Involving families makes the activity more meaningful while strengthening home-school connections!

Supports for Spanish Providers

November 3rd, General Elections in PA. Plan to go out and vote! For more voter information go to https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-support

November 14th: **L.E.A.P. Retreat (Leadership Empowerment Action Project)** - This is a great opportunity for anyone interested in learning more about the ECE Fellowship to get a sense of advocacy, but is also a nice stand-alone opportunity for anyone looking for a day of learning and a chance to meet OCDEL Deputy Secretary Shante' Brown, who will be speaking on the morning panel. Breakfast, lunch, and PQAS credit provided. Click **here** to register.

Nov. 19th: ECE Latinos Roundtable at 1pm. Meeting will be online and En *Español.* ECE providers can gather virtually to hear updates regarding state funding opportunities, advocacy resources and more! Among our attendees are ELRC quality coaches, higher ed partners, and other professionals in the field. Click here to register.

First Up's ECE Advocacy Fellowship: Now accepting applications! For 16 years, First Up has brought forward the opportunity for various professionals in the field to come together to learn strategies for advocacy, build on their leadership and communication skills and understand the systemic issues facing the ECE field. A series of 5 sessions, some in person in Philadelphia County and others virtual, participants leave with over 27 PQAS hours and tools added to their toolbox. This opportunity runs in two cohorts, one in English and one in Spanish. See the flyers below for more information or apply here: First Up ECE Fellowship Application

- Advocacy Fellowship - English
- Advocacy Fellowship - Spanish

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
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

Keystone STARS Tip of the Month
Workshop Topics for Standard FC 3.4.5

Keystone STARS indicator FC3.4.5 looks for opportunities for families to attend educational workshops. Workshops have to provide space for participants to come together and engage in discussion and activity. Some sample workshop topics could include making healthy food choices at home, early literacy, developmentally appropriate activities or as the holidays draw close, selecting educational toys and activities for young children. Bringing caregivers together to discuss and learn about a topic is a way for parents to network with other families in the program.

To strengthen attendance in your workshop, consider the following:

- Is the workshop scheduled at a time that will fit into families' schedules (not during their work hours)?
- Can we offer child care or include children in the workshop's activities?
- Have we asked parents what topics would be meaningful to them?
- Can we bring in a guest speaker, like a local pediatrician or librarian, to enhance our content?

If your program is struggling to think of workshop topics, reach out to your Quality Coach.

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health consultation provides support for parents and child care professionals who work with children experiencing persistent or puzzling challenges.

The program offers a combination of support through IECMH Virtual Office Hours and IECMH Consultations.

IECMH Virtual Office Hours is a free service where you can:

- Meet one-on-one with an IECMH Consultant.
- Get a supportive place to share your concerns about a child who is struggling with behavior, attachment, peer relationships, or emotion regulation.
- Figure out the meaning of a child's behavior.
- Find solutions and next steps to help a child through the power of nurturing relationships.

IECMH Consultation is also a free service where you can:

- Collaborate with a Consultant to reflect and problem-solve when a child is struggling with behavior, attachment, peer relationships, or emotion regulation.
- Build teamwork with a child's family.
- Develop an Action Plan to support children and classroom staff.
- Learn new ways to help children learn skills like sharing, getting along with others, and expressing emotions in a healthy way.

Consultation comes in the form of virtual Consultation and in-person/on-site Consultation.

To learn more about ICEMH services, check out their most recent newsletter and **subscribe**.

· **Bright Start, Bright Kids, Bright Future**

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!

Confluence Podcast Episode

#13 – Support Before Sanctions: Helping Child Care Providers Stay on Track

Running a child care program comes with real challenges, from staffing shortages and leadership transitions to training, documentation, supervision, and the day-to-day responsibility of keeping children safe. When challenges begin to build, knowing when and where to ask for help can make all the difference.

Deputy Secretary Shante' Brown and Bureau of Certification Services Director Ruby Martin discuss how OCDEL can support child care providers. They talk about early warning signs, when to reach out for assistance, what happens when a provider asks Certification for help, and the resources available through OCDEL and its partners.

The conversation also explores how OCDEL balances its responsibility to protect children's health and safety with its commitment to helping providers understand requirements, strengthen their programs, and maintain compliance.

You don't have to wait until there's a serious problem to ask for help. Listen to **Episode #13 – Support Before Sanctions: Helping Child Care Providers Stay on Track**.

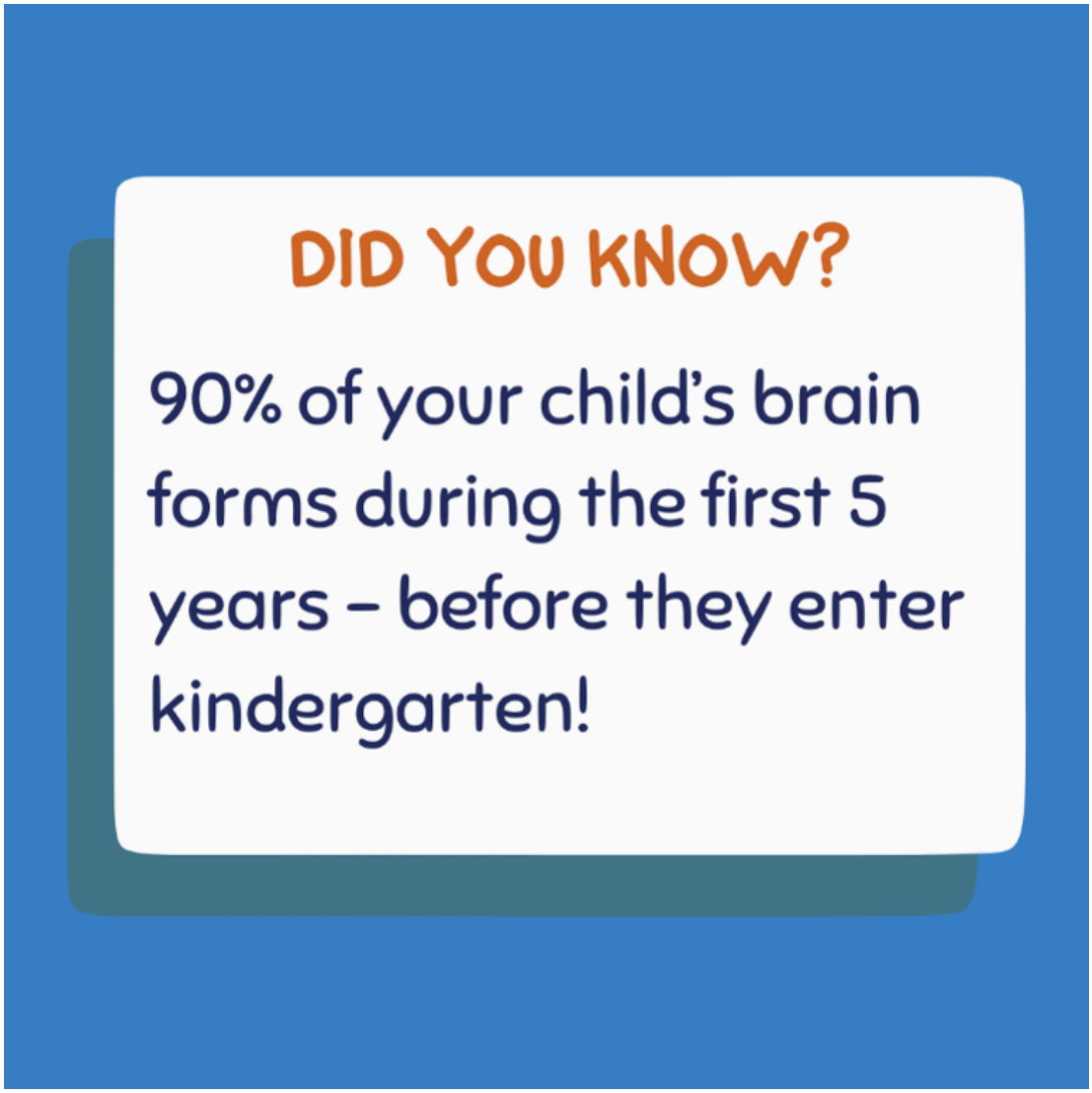
Opt In for OCDEL Newsletters

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**.

Free Milestone Posters

Providers, you can order Milestone Tracker posters! These FREE posters were created by CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics for families, available in English and Spanish! FREE!

The posters can be ordered here: **https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MTFCSCD**



Oral Health Tip

Reading to Children about Oral Health



Reading to children is an important way you can help them develop language skills and learn information about the world. Reading to children about oral health can help them be prepared to visit the dentist and to learn about caring for their teeth.

Check out these book lists for young children: **Books about Going to the Dentist** and **Books about Teeth**. Happy reading!

*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 14

Community Services for Children |elrc14@cscinc.org| www.cscinc.org

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