


# Community Services for Children

# Family Connection Newsletter ~ ELRC Region 14 November 2026

### Serving Lehigh & Northampton Counties

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## Region 14 News

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



### Child Care Works Reminder

The Pennsylvania Subsidized Child Care Eligibility regulations provide information to families regarding their responsibilities to pay the copayment for subsidized childcare. Failure to pay co-payment is identified as an Intentional Program Violation and may result in loss of subsidy benefits.

Please see the following notification to fully understand your co-pay responsibilities. Reach out to your family specialist with any questions.

[Intentional Program Violation - English]
[Intentional Program Violation - Spanish]

## Early Head Start and Head Start

Did you know Early Head Start and Head Start are free programs available to families who live in Lehigh and Northampton Counties? Priority is given to families who are below 100% the federal poverty guidelines. The Early Head Start program is for pregnant women and children 0-2 years of age. Head Start is for children 3-4 years of age. Click here for more information on what these programs include and how to register.

## Fall Into Learning This November with St. Luke's Children's Hospital



St. Luke's Children's Hospital is offering interactive workshops in November focused on child development, behavior, communication and practical strategies for supporting children and families. Families who join will gain helpful tools, connect with others, learn from experts, and leave with resources they can use right away. Click **here** for more information and to register.



## Support for Youth Family Caregivers: The Second Time Around

Pinebrook Family Answers is offering a FREE 9-week Support Group for Youth Family Caregivers focused at supporting grandparents and other family caregivers raising youth. The group meets virtually every Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. through Microsoft Teams. Click **here** for more information. Please email **grandparentsgroup@pbfalv.org** with any questions.

## Apply for Home Heating and Energy Assistance

The 2026-2027 LIHEAP season is now open! The season runs November 2, 2026 through April 23, 2027. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP) provides cash grants to help Pennsylvanians pay their heating bills. Households in immediate danger of being without heat can also qualify for crisis grants. For more information go to **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**.

There are two ways to apply for LIHEAP:

1. Online: **Apply for benefits online using COMPASS**, the online tool for Pennsylvanians to apply for and manage health and human service programs.
2. On paper: You can download a paper application, print it, fill it out, and return it to your local **County Assistance Office (CAO))**. Click **here** for a paper

application.

### 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

### I Talk to My Child's Teacher Every Day. Do I Really Need a Conference?



You might be asking yourself this very question. You see your child's teacher every morning at drop-off and every afternoon at pick-up. You talk about how their day went, what they ate, how they slept, and maybe something fun they did. So, you feel like you already have a pretty good idea of how your child's day went. What else is there to talk about? Well, actually, quite a bit!

Think about those everyday interactions, everyone is busy, and sometimes there just isn't time to ask all the questions or share everything on your mind. A parent-teacher conference is different. It's time set aside just for you and your child's teacher, with one important focus: your child! It's a chance to slow down and get a closer look at their world and the people and experiences that are part of their day. You can hear about the friendships they're building, what they're learning, the activities they enjoy, and the progress they're making. Teachers can share observations and assessments, and you can ask questions or share things you've noticed at home. You might even learn something new about your child!

Everyday conversations help keep you connected, but a conference helps you see the bigger picture. Take the opportunity to learn more about your child's world and celebrate how far they've come; it's time well spent!

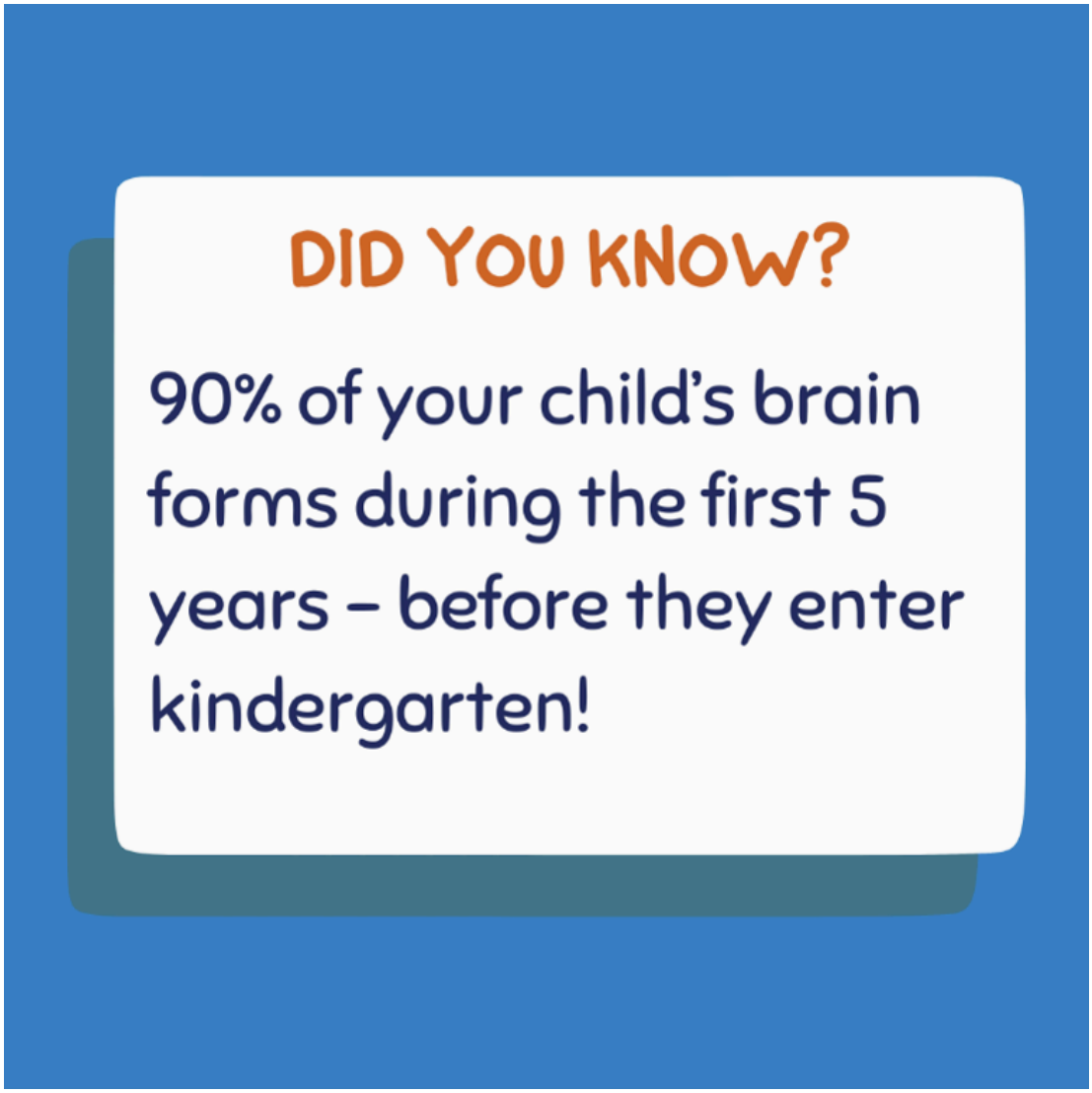
For more information, check out "It's Conference Time!" from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): **https://www.naeyc.org/system/files/mib_12.1.pdf**

### 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)*




## Child Development

### Growing Strong Brains Through Everyday Experiences

Did you know that a child's brain grows faster during the first five years of life than at any other time? Every day, young children make millions of connections in their brains through the experiences they have and the relationships they build. The simple moments you share with your child—talking, reading, playing, singing, and exploring together—help build the foundation for learning that lasts a lifetime.

Children don't need expensive toys or structured lessons to develop strong brains. In fact, the most powerful learning opportunities often happen during everyday routines. A conversation during breakfast, counting apples at the grocery store, or talking about the colors of the leaves on a walk all help children develop language, thinking, and problem-solving skills.

**How Everyday Experiences Build Healthy Brain Development**
Positive interactions with caring adults help children:

- Develop language and communication skills.
- Build memory and attention.
- Strengthen problem-solving and critical thinking.
- Learn self-control and emotional regulation.
- Develop curiosity and a love of learning.
- Gain confidence through exploration and discovery.

Every time you respond to your child's questions, encourage their curiosity, or share a laugh together, you are helping strengthen the connections in their growing brain.

**Simple Ways to Support Brain Development at Home**
You don't need extra time or special materials—just make the most of everyday moments.

- Talk often. Describe what you're doing, ask questions, and encourage conversations, even with infants and toddlers.
- Read together every day. Reading builds vocabulary, imagination, listening skills, and a lifelong love of books.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes. Music helps children develop language, memory, rhythm, and listening skills.
- Count and compare. Count steps, toys, or snacks, and talk about sizes, shapes, and patterns.
- Encourage exploration. Let your child investigate nature, build with blocks, create art, and ask questions.
- Limit distractions. Set aside time without screens to focus on talking, playing, and spending time together.
- Celebrate curiosity. It's okay if you don't know all the answers! Explore and learn together.

**Every Moment Matters**
Remember, you are your child's first and most important teacher. The love, attention, and everyday experiences you provide help build a strong, healthy brain and a lifelong foundation for learning.

## Resource & Referral

### Mental Health Supports for Children

Sesame Workshop provides so many resources for parents and families! Click **here** to view resources to support your child's mental and emotional development.

If you have concerns about your child's mental health, reach out to your pediatrician, your child's teacher, or the ELRC for support. Click **here** for a support guide.

**https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/mentalhealth/**

https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/social-emotional-skills/

## Food Pantry Services



Food pantries receive regular deliveries from their partner food bank to serve their community. There are many websites that provide lists to food banks in your area! Click on the titles below.

**Feeding Pennsylvania**
Feeding Pennsylvania is a partner state association of Feeding America. Every year, they help millions of Pennsylvanians access high quality, nutritious food. They do this by partnering with a statewide network of food banks, agencies and meal programs.

**PA Navigate**
PA-Navigate is a website that provides you with a list of local resources for food, housing, goods, transit, health, money, care, education, work, and legal help. Search under food for a list of local food pantries in your community.

**CEO People Helping People**
CEO works with food pantries to provide individuals or families with opportunities to move toward stability and self-sufficiency. Search for food pantries in your community.

## Learn More About Pennsylvania's Early Learning Programs

Have you ever wondered how Certification and Keystone STARS help ensure children are safe as they grow and learn? Curious if programs like PA Pre-K Counts, Early Intervention, or Family Support might be the right fit for your child?

The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has created brand-new videos for families like yours! These short, easy-to-follow videos share everything you need to know.

Take a look—and don't forget to pass them along to friends and family who might find them helpful too!

The short, family-friendly videos are available in English and Spanish.

- Pennsylvania's Child Care Certification: What it means for you, **English** and **Spanish**
- Pennsylvania's Child Care Works: Helping Families Afford Safe Child Care **English** and **Spanish**
- Pennsylvania's Early Intervention: Supporting Young Children **English** and **Spanish**
- Pennsylvania's Family Support Programs for Pregnant or Parenting Families of Young Children, **English** and **Spanish**
- Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS: Quality in Child Care **English** and **Spanish**
- Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts: Providing a Strong Start in School **English** and **Spanish**

# 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 Child Safety and Protection Month




Because November is designated as National Child Safety and Protection Month, it is the ideal time for parents to audit their homes:

- Furniture Anchoring: Secure heavy dressers, bookshelves, and televisions to the wall to prevent tip-over injuries.
- Choking & Toy Audits: Check floors and low storage bins for small hazards like coins, keys, buttons, or small removable parts from older siblings' toys.
- Baby Proofing & Gates: Ensure safety gates are securely locked at the top and bottom of stairs, and use electrical outlet covers to protect curious toddlers.
- Locking Away Toxins: All medications, household cleaners, and automotive fluids must be kept in original containers with childproof caps and stored in high, locked cabinets.
- Firearm Safety: If firearms are kept in the home, verify they are stored unloaded in a locked vault or safe, with ammunition locked away in a completely separate location.
- The "3-Foot Zone": Establish a strict 3-foot kid- and pet-free safety perimeter around the stove and areas where hot food or drinks are prepared. Never hold a baby or toddler while drinking hot liquids or cooking.
- Fireplace & Candle Safety: Keep matches, lighters, and candles well out of reach. Ensure a protective screen covers open fireplaces when active

National Child Safety and Protection Month is not a call to restrict a child's curiosity, but rather an invitation to build a secure foundation that allows them to explore safely. By addressing hidden household dangers, implementing solid habits, and keeping emergency numbers prominently displayed, communities can drastically lower injury rates and ensure that children grow up in healthy, protective environments.

For more tips visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at **www.cdc.gov**

## Reading to Children about Oral Health



Reading to your child(ren) is an important way you can help them develop language skills and learn information about the world. Reading to your child(ren) 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***

## Family Engagement



### 10 Ways to Support Your Child's Literacy at Home

Supporting your child's literacy at home can be fun and easy! Spending time reading to your child, singing, and labeling home objects can help improve your child's interest in reading, attitude towards reading, and focus.

1. Read nursery rhymes and books aloud together.
2. Sing, draw, and tell stories.
3. Play audiobooks to increase the amount of language your child hears.
4. Label objects in your home to show the importance of language, reading, and writing.
5. Play word games.
6. Talk about the meaning of words.
7. Point out interesting or new words when reading together.
8. Offer a literacy-rich environment at home.
9. Talk about school, magazines, or current events.
10. Model good literacy behavior by reading regularly yourself.

*Adapted from: National Center on Improving Literacy. (2017). 10 Ways to Support Your Child's Literacy at Home. **https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/supporting-your-child-s-literacy-at-home***

**Visit ELRC Region 14**

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