

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2025



KID BITS

Rhyme time

While waiting at the doctor's office or in traffic, practice rhyming words with your youngster. For example, say, "What rhymes with *star*?" (*bar, car, far*). Take turns until you can't think of any more, and then pick a new word to rhyme. Playing with rhymes will help your child sound out words as he learns to read.

Activities to share

Before holiday gatherings, let your youngster gather toys and activities that encourage sharing and playing together. She might collect board games, building blocks, and paper and crayons, for instance. Place the items in easy reach for use when company comes.

Imaginary vacation

Taking a pretend trip is a fun way for your child to stretch his imagination. Have him close his eyes and imagine he's on a lake or in the mountains. Ask him to tell you what he sees and does. For a trip to the mountains, he could describe the green trees, snowy peaks, and uphill hikes.

Worth quoting

"Never be afraid to sit awhile and think." *Lorraine Hansberry*

Just for fun

Q: What has a thumb and four fingers but isn't alive?

A: A glove!



Handling life's letdowns

Does disappointment turn your child's smile into a pout? While it's tempting to try to fix everything for her, experts suggest teaching her ways to work through her feelings instead. These ideas will help her cope when things don't go her way.

Set the stage for success

When you know a situation may be hard for your youngster, try to prepare her ahead of time. For example, does she get upset if she loses a game? Consider creating a family rule: after playing, everyone shakes hands and says, "Good game." Tell her that while it's okay to feel sad, throwing a fit takes the fun out of game time.

Learn from setbacks

Today's meltdown can become tomorrow's success. Say your child got mad in school because she didn't get to be the line leader. Together, think of three ways she could react if she is in the same



situation again. Examples: Take deep breaths, think of another way she can be a classroom helper.

Bounce back

Encourage your youngster to recover from a setback by looking on the bright side. If her friend cancels a play date, you might say, "I know you're disappointed. Can you think of something fun you could do instead?" Practice this strategy a few times, and she'll gradually learn to bounce back on her own.♥

Let's make music!

Playing and hearing music can increase your youngster's listening skills, memory, and coordination. And there's evidence that it helps with reading and math, too. Inspire him to enjoy music with these tips:



- Tap out four or five notes on a toy keyboard or xylophone, and see if your child can copy you. He'll need to listen carefully and remember the notes you played. Then, let him play notes for you to copy.

- Help your youngster make a drum. He can use construction paper and tape to cover a coffee or oatmeal canister and then decorate it with crayons. Put on a CD, a playlist, or the radio, and have him use wooden spoons to play to the beat of the song.♥

Today's forecast: Learning

Whether it's sunny and mild or cold and snowy, weather brings plenty of learning opportunities. Try these activities with your youngster.

Read books. Together, read stories that match the weather. Your child will begin to make connections between books and real life—an important reading comprehension skill. If it's snowing, you might sit by the window and read a book like *The Snowy Day* by

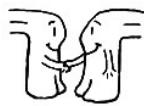


Ezra Jack Keats. What does your youngster see outside that matches the pictures? Or you could read about a different kind of weather and make comparisons (try *At the Beach* by Anne and Harlow Rockwell).

Observe and draw. Have your child record each day's weather. He can go outside to check the weather and then draw a

symbol (cloud, sun) on the calendar to match. At the end of the week, let him count and tell you how many of each symbol he drew. ("We had 4 cloudy days and 3 sunny days.") Ask, "Were there more cloudy days or sunny ones?"

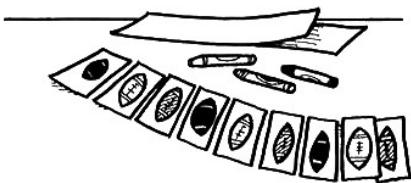
ACTIVITY CORNER



Pattern puzzle

Red, blue, red, blue...what comes next? This puzzle encourages your youngster to make patterns—a skill that will help her understand number patterns.

Materials: empty cereal or snack box, crayons, scissors



Cut a strip of cardboard from the box. Then, have your child draw a colorful pattern on the strip. She might alternate green, yellow, and purple footballs, for example, and then repeat the pattern. Next, help her cut the strip into individual puzzle squares with one football per square.

She can mix up the pieces and put the pattern back together. Ask her to name each color as she goes. If she gets stuck, suggest that she start from the beginning: "Green, yellow, purple, green..."

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.



2880 Pottsville Minersville Highway, Suite 210
Minersville, PA 17954

Q & A

Meeting siblings' needs

Q: My younger son, James, has special needs and requires extra attention from us. How can I explain this to my kindergartner, Evan, so he doesn't get so jealous?

A: Kindergartners may be too young to understand special needs, but they're beginning to pick up on differences. Acknowledge Evan's feelings, and explain the situation in basic terms. Example: "I know you're feeling left out. It's hard for James to do some of the things you can do, so we spend extra time helping him."

Then, try to set aside one-on-one time each day with your older son. If James goes to speech or physical therapy, you might take a walk with Evan during the appointment. Or play together after your little one goes to bed. If you have close relatives nearby, you could arrange for Evan to do special activities with them, too.



PARENT TO PARENT

Not Pinterest-perfect

I enjoy looking at all the creative crafts and activities on Pinterest and other websites. But when my daughter Sophie and I try projects, they rarely turn out like the ones in the photos.

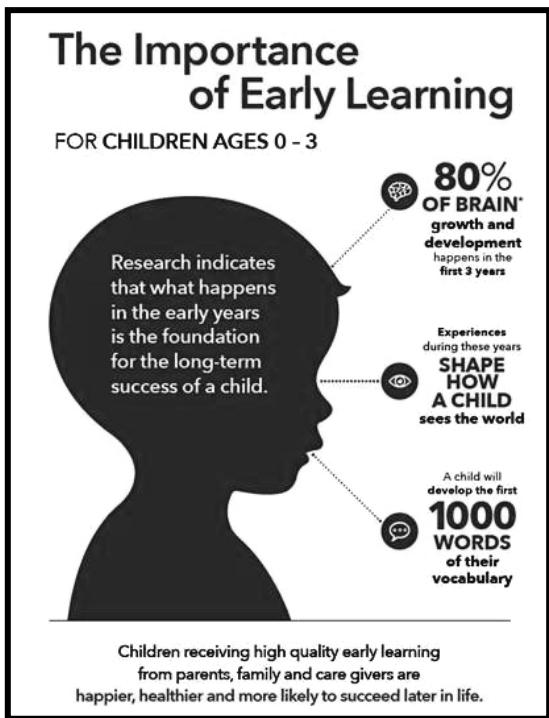
I was telling my sister about this, and she just laughed. She reminded me of things we used to do with our parents. We didn't care if our windsocks were crooked or



if our dragon puppets looked like crocodiles. We loved them because they were fun to make.

My sister helped me see that being creative and having fun is more important than perfect projects. Also, my daughter is learning to take chances and try new things without worrying that she'll make a mistake. Our next project: caterpillars made out of egg cartons.

The Top Five Benefits of Early Childhood Education



Children's brains develop faster from birth to age 5 than any other time in their lives. In fact, 90% of brain development occurs **before a child enters kindergarten**.

It's important for parents to take advantage of these early childhood years by encouraging as much development as possible. One effective way to do this is by enrolling your child in an early childhood education program.

Early childhood education programs understand how to take advantage of these crucial first years. Program educators are trained to nurture the social, developmental and cognitive needs of children under 5. In this article, we break down the benefits of early childhood education on children and society as a whole.

1. Early Childhood Education Improves Social Skills

Early childhood education programs help children develop social skills. Rather than being at home all day, children are exposed to other kids and adults outside of their families.

In an early childhood education setting, children learn valuable interpersonal skills such as listening, sharing and expressing emotions. Establishing these skills early can help set children up for healthier social lives in future years.

2. Early Childhood Education is Linked to Greater Success in Life

Children who take part in an early childhood education program are more likely to be successful as teenagers and adults. Children who receive early childhood education are 25% more likely to graduate high school and four times more likely to complete a bachelor's degree.

They're also less likely to face academic problems, including repeating grades. Once these children do graduate, they tend to earn more in the workforce.

The link between early childhood education and future success was illustrated by a study called the Abecedarian Early Intervention Project. This study monitored children in two groups for more than 35 years: one that experienced early childhood education and one that did not. The children in the group that received early childhood education were more successful academically and financially. They also had better mental and physical health overall.

3. Early Childhood Education Gives Parents Freedom to Study and Work

One major benefit of early childhood education is the freedom it gives parents. Without childcare, it's extremely difficult for parents to secure full-time work or attend school. But with early childhood education, parents are able to take back sometime for themselves.

Early childhood education programs give parents a safe and secure place to leave their kids during the day. The positive impact of early childhood education on families can be seen by looking at the way Washington D.C. handles early learning.

In 2009, Washington D.C. began rolling out its universal preschool program. Today, three-quarters of preschool-aged kids are enrolled in the district. Once they introduced free preschool, labor force participation for women with young children increased nearly 10%. The impact for low-income mothers was even higher, at 15%.

While Indiana doesn't have the same universal preschool program, there are many early childhood education programs to choose from. There are also funds available to help make early childhood education accessible to all families.

4. Early Childhood Education Offers Screenings for Health and Behavioral Issues

As children grow up, there are a number of developmental milestones they should achieve. It can be difficult for busy parents to monitor these milestones. That's where early childhood educators come in.

Early childhood educators are knowledgeable about the developmental milestones for children of all ages, and they're trained to look for indicators that milestones aren't being met. They're also trained to formally screen for these milestones. When you enroll your child in an early childhood education program, you're leaving them with professionals who perform these screenings and report the results back to you.

5. Early Childhood Education Positively Impacts Society

Early childhood education has multi-generational impacts. The children who receive early childhood care are more likely to grow up and contribute positively to their communities and workplaces.

Meanwhile, when children are taken care of, parents have the freedom to work and advance in their own careers. Lost earnings due to poor or non-existent child care totals \$57 billion per year. By giving parents care options, early childhood education has a significant positive impact on the economy.

In fact, every dollar invested in early childhood programs yields a **\$6.30 return on investment**, as both the children in these programs and their parents grow to become more financially independent and less likely to need government assistance.

10 Ways to Reduce Stress in Your Life

You can't avoid stress. It's part of life. But you can keep it from getting the best of you.



1. Talk about what's stressing you.

You'll feel better and you may be surprised by the support you receive.

2. Listen to what you tell yourself.

Aim to replace negative thoughts with more supportive one. Instead of "I can't do this," say "I'll do the best I can."

3. Take one thing at a time.

Make a to-do list and check off items as they are done. Even a little progress can make a long list seem easier to tackle.

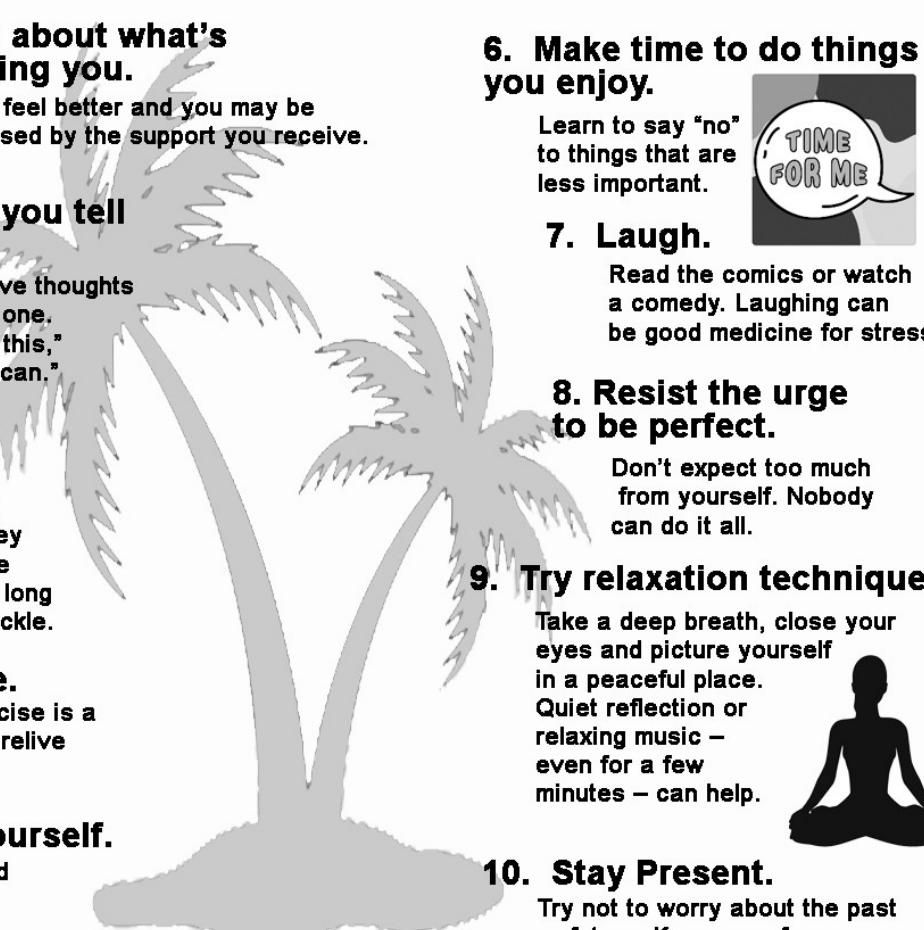


4. Exercise.

Regular exercise is a great way to relieve stress.

5. Take care of yourself.

Get enough sleep and eat a healthy diet.



6. Make time to do things you enjoy.

Learn to say "no" to things that are less important.



7. Laugh.

Read the comics or watch a comedy. Laughing can be good medicine for stress..

8. Resist the urge to be perfect.

Don't expect too much from yourself. Nobody can do it all.

9. Try relaxation techniques.

Take a deep breath, close your eyes and picture yourself in a peaceful place. Quiet reflection or relaxing music – even for a few minutes – can help.



10. Stay Present.

Try not to worry about the past or future. Keep your focus on today.

WHY KEEP STRESS IN CHECK?

Too much stress may cause headaches, backaches or problems sleeping. Stress can also lead to serious illness such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Taking steps to lower your stress can help improve your overall health.

Early Childhood

HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT



Building Healthy and Safe Sleep Routines

Sleep helps the brain and body grow and develop. Children who get enough sleep have the energy to take part in learning activities, focus and pay attention, and manage their emotions. Most children benefit from scheduled periods of rest. A rest could be a nap, quiet time, or a calm break between activities. Sleep and rest routines are important for healthy child development.

The ideal sleeping environment is safe, quiet, comfortable, and mainly used for sleep. It's somewhere a child's sleep will be interrupted as little as possible.



How much sleep children need changes as they grow. Infants do not have regular sleep patterns until they are about 6 months old. Newborns sleep around 16 to 17 hours a day, but they may sleep only one or two hours at a time.

Young children get their sleep during naptime and bedtime. The recommendations here are based on age, for a 24-hour period. Individual children's needs and patterns may be different.

RECOMMENDED HOURS OF SLEEP FOR AGES:

Age Group	Total Number of Sleep Hours in 24 Hours (Including naps)
Infants (4–12 months)	12–16 hours
Toddlers (1–3 years old)	11–14 hours
Preschoolers (3–5 years old)	10–13 hours

Safe Sleep Practices For Toddlers and Preschoolers

When a child is tall enough or mobile enough to possibly climb out of a crib, it's time to move them to a safer sleeping environment such as a bed, mat, or cot.

Use guard rails, a toddler bed, or a mattress on the floor until the child is used to sleeping in a bed. This protects children from falls.

If the crib or bed is near a window, make sure the drawstrings that open or close blinds or curtains are always out of reach. Drawstrings can strangle children.

Weighted Sleep Products

Do not use weighted products with children under the age of 3 or with a child of any age who cannot remove the weighted product by themselves. Weighted blankets, swaddles, sleep sacks, and stuffed animals may restrict breathing and suffocate children.

For children over the age of 3: Only use weighted sleep products if caregivers bring them in and a licensed health care provider has specifically recommended them.

Do not use weighted sleep products unless an adult closely supervises the child. Look for signs of overheating (e.g., sweating, crying, flushed or red skin) and stop using the weighted product if you see any of these signs.

Never use weighted sleep products as restraints. A child should always be able to remove a weighted sleep product by themselves.

Building a Sleep Routine

The key to successful sleep routines is consistency. Routines are great for children and families. When starting a new sleep routine, it may take a while for everyone to get used to it. Share these bedtime routine tips with families:

- Follow a schedule for naps and rest.
- Set a regular bedtime, including on weekends.
- Turn off screens at least an hour before bedtime. This includes the TV, video games, phones, etc. These

make it harder for your child to fall asleep and stay asleep.

- Limit drinks, except water. Avoid beverages high in sugar or caffeine, such as juice, tea, and soft drinks, before sleep.
- Start a child's sleep routine about 30–60 minutes before they go to bed. This allows a child to know it's time for bed.
- Include quiet time during the bedtime routine to talk about your child's day, read a book, or listen to soft music.
- Brush teeth before sleep.
- Limit indoor lights as bedtime approaches.
- Make the room 65–68 F if possible. A cooler room makes it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Caution About Sleep Aids

Sleep aids are generally not recommended for young children. Before using any sleep medications or supplements such as melatonin, speak with a licensed health care provider. Supplements have not been carefully studied, and their long-term effects are not well understood.

Always follow medication administration policies and procedures for prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and supplements.

Always put babies to sleep on their back for naps and at night until age 1. A safe sleep area can help reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related deaths, such as accidental suffocation. Remove loose bedding and all soft objects, including stuffed animals, from the sleeping area. Infants should sleep in a crib, bassinet, portable crib, or portable play yard with a fitted sheet.

Sleeping equipment should meet current Consumer Product Safety Commission standards. See these resources on sleep for more information.

5 Tips and Ways to . . .

Manage Financial Stress This Holiday Season

While the holiday season is supposed to be a joyful time, it can also be a financially stressful time. The cost of gifts, social gatherings, family meals, and plane tickets quickly add up. Worrying about money can negatively impact your mental and physical health, your relationships, and your overall quality of life. It can affect your sleep and self-esteem, exacerbate pain and mood swings, and result in unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking too much, abusing drugs, or gambling.

However, changing your spending habits during the holidays doesn't have to be joyless. Having proactive conversations with friends and family, making a budget, and setting limits are just some of the ways you can manage your financial stress this holiday season. Read on for more ways you can enjoy this special time of year without going broke.

- Establish a realistic holiday spending budget.** Unexpected expenses can add up quickly, especially around the holidays, if you don't plan ahead. Make a budget so you can keep track of how much you want to spend and how you want to spend it.
- Get comfortable with saying "no" to additional spending.** Give yourself permission to say "no" to spending more money on gifts or parties than you planned. Prior to the holidays, be honest with loved ones about your holiday budget to help manage expectations.
- Discuss low-cost ways to celebrate with friends and family.** Talk with your loved ones about alternatives to gift-giving this year that take the pressure off everyone. Maybe you set a spending limit or skip the gift exchange all together. Instead of making your gift exchange the focus, introduce a new activity that could be enjoyed by all, enhancing your celebration and maybe starting a new tradition.
- Make shopping lists to stay organized.** A shopping list can help you stay on track when food shopping, party shopping, and gift shopping. It also helps you to stick to your budget.
- Find your joy.** When you are feeling stressed out, it's easy to lose your holiday spirit. Find time to step back from the chaos and do something that brings you joy. This could be taking a walk, reading a good book, doing a crossword puzzle, or savoring a hot shower.

The bottom line is that the holidays can be a stressful time for many reasons. It's normal to feel overwhelmed by the financial aspect of the season, and it's ok to reach out for support.

Help Stay Present During the Holidays

The holidays are inevitably a busy time. With the hustle and bustle of the season, it's easy to forget self-care, an attitude of gratitude, and being present in the moment. Time is your most precious commodity, and it should be treated as such. Here are five tips to hurry

less and be more present. You – and everyone around you – will feel better about your time together.



- Say "No, thank you."** If you can't say yes to a request or invitation with a gracious heart, then say "No, thank you." This will keep you from feeling overwhelmed while allowing time and space for an opportunity that brings you joy.
- Less is more.** The more intentional you are about which family gatherings, open houses, and parties you choose to attend, the more meaningful they are and the more likely you are to savor and appreciate the experience.
- Use your words.** Rather than letting stress accumulate and result in unhealthy words or actions, name your stressors, break them into smaller, manageable parts. Once you give voice or write out your stress list, priorities become more apparent.
- Ask for help.** Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are people in your life who are willing to help and support you when you are feeling overwhelmed. Use this opportunity as a chance to connect with them.
- Slow down.** Life moves at a hectic pace, especially during the holidays. Try to slow down and make time for a kind word or a smile for each person you encounter. Taking the time to meaningfully connect may be the gift you need and the best gift they receive. You'll change their day and yours.

If you need extra help in managing your financial and/or emotional stress, **St. Luke's Penn Foundation** can help.

For more information about our counseling services or to schedule an appointment, please contact **Client Registration at 484-822-5700.**

Child **fyi** Things you need to know—all in one place!

DECEMBER CLOSINGS

Dec. 1 — All centers & office
CLOSED

Dec. 24 — All centers & office
CLOSED

Dec. 25 — All centers & office
CLOSED

Dec. 26 — All centers & office
CLOSED

Dec. 29 — Head Start & Pre-K CLOSED*

Dec. 30 — Head Start & Pre-K CLOSED*

Dec. 31 — Head Start & Pre-K CLOSED*

Jan. 1 — All centers & office
CLOSED

* Child Care Classrooms and the
Main Office will be open on these days.

MEETINGS

Planning Committee

Friday, Dec. 12th

10 AM In-Person Meeting
(a ZOOM link for the meeting will
also be emailed to members)

Policy Council

MONTHLY MEETING

Mon., Dec. 15th at 9:30 AM
In-Person Meeting

(a ZOOM link for the meeting will also
be emailed to members)

Emergency Closings and Delays

In case of an emergency closing or delay due to weather, an announcement will be made on the local radio and television stations.



All decisions regarding the emergency closing or delay of either Program-wide or a specific centers will be made with your child's safety and well-being as our primary concern. The cancellation or delay will be aired on the stations below:

WMGH	Tamaqua	FM 105.5
WPPA	Pottsville	AM 1360
T102	Pottsville	FM 101.9
WPAM	Pottsville	AM 1450
WNEP TV	Scranton	Channel 16

Cancellations and delays will be made as early as possible. We will be specific as to whether it is the Head Start and PreK Counts Programs only or the Child Care Program (which includes the Administrative Office) that will be closed or delayed.



Old Man Winter will be here before we know it. With that in mind we wanted to remind you that Child Development, Inc. uses an automated message system to alert parents and staff when our centers or the Program are closed due to inclement weather or other emergencies.

We also use this message system to inform and remind families of other important Program and center events.

As long as we have a current cell phone number, which is the same one that is listed on your emergency card, and/or an e-mail address, you will receive automated messages. **Therefore, it is very important to keep your emergency contact information accurate and up-to-date.**

Enroll Your Child TODAY!

Give your child the best possible start on their educational journey in our preschool program!

CHILD DEVELOPMENT, INC. helps prepare children both academically and socially for a smooth transition to kindergarten. Most families qualify, we are federally and state-funded and we provide a variety of services, including:

- A focus on education to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.
- Health screenings and support, including dental, mental, and physical health.
- Nutritious meals, such as breakfast and lunch.
- Family partnership to empower parents as their child's most important teacher.



Development, Inc.

570-544-8959 | Ext. 210



PROUD PARTNER AGENCY OF
Schuylkill
UNITED WAY



8 LOCATIONS

- Fountain Springs
- Schuylkill Haven
- Mahanoy City
- Shenandoah
- Pottsville (2 centers)
- Tamaqua
- Saint Clair



~ REFER A FRIEND ~



Do you have a friend or relative with a preschool age child (or children) and lives within Schuylkill County? If so, please give them this coupon to complete and return to you so you can turn it in to your child's teacher or family advocate.

Date: _____

Referring Family: _____

Child Name: _____

Referred Family: _____

Child Name: _____ DOB: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Best time to call: Morning Afternoon

Family is interested in the following center: Fountain Springs Mahanoy City Pottsville Pottsville 2
 Saint Clair Sch. Haven Shenandoah Tamaqua

MISSION STATEMENT

We work with families and the community to provide high quality, comprehensive early childhood education with an emphasis on family involvement and supportive services that prepares each child for success in school and a lifetime of learning.

Development, Inc.

Families Head Start PreK Counts
 Child Care Early Intervention Community