HEAD START

Head Start is a federally funded preschool program for children from low-income families. In Pennsylvania, the program is operated by a variety of local nonprofit agencies and public school systems. Head Start provides a high-quality education program to children and their families. In addition, the program makes sure that children receive the medical services they need. To get more information about a local Head Start program in your area, call 1-877-4PA-KIDS (1-877-472-5437).

LET COMPASS BE YOUR GUIDE

If you want to find out if you qualify for health and human service's programs in the Commonwealth, or apply for new benefits, there is a single online application to help you.

By using COMPASS, you can apply for most state benefit programs at any time during the day or night from home, a library, or any location with internet access. The system also allows you to check the status of your application once it's filed. Check it out at compass.dhs.pa.gov/home/#/ or call the helpline at 1-800-692-7462.

You may also visit the County Assistance Office in the county in which you reside for assistance. Visit pa.gov/en/agencies/dhs/contact/cao-information for a list of office locations and contact information.

GETTING CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL

CHILDREN IN PA

deserve to be "ready to learn" when entering kindergarten or first grade. They should have appropriate nutrition and health care, access to quality preschool and day care programs, parental guidance at home and instruction on basic skills.

BE YOUR CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER

One of the most important ways parents can get their children ready for school is by being their first teacher. Children are more likely to succeed in school when parents do the following:

- Encourage reading in the home.
- Spend time talking and doing things with you children.
- Teach self-reliance in order to build self-confidence and independence.
- Guide children in the development of social skills.
- Monitor your child's use of television and electronic devices.

For more information about how you can get your child ready for kindergarten, call CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288 or email help@connectpa.net or submit a form online at pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/instruction/early-learning/early-intervention.

PROPER NUTRITION

Part of getting your child ready to learn is making sure they receive the proper nutrition to keep their bodies healthy and strong. Preschoolers (between the ages of 1-6) learn how to eat from what you feed them. What your children learn about food when they are young will be important for the rest of their lives. To receive information about good nutrition, visit the Department of Education's website at pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/schools/food-and-nutrition.

If you have children under 5 years old, live in Pennsylvania and meet income guidelines, you could be eligible for the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Program. WIC provides healthy foods, health and nutrition information, in addition to immunization screenings to those families that qualify. To find out more information about the WIC Program or to find the office nearest you, call 1-800-WIC-WINS (1-800-942-9467) or visit pawic.com.

IMMUNIZATION

Proof of vaccination is required for children to attend school in Pennsylvania. Exceptions can be requested for medical, religious, and philosophical reasons. For more information about school immunizations, call the Department of Health's toll-free number 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) or visit pa.gov/agencies/health/programs/immunizations/school.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (CHIP)

CHIP provides free or reduced-cost health insurance to uninsured children and teens who are not eligible for or enrolled in Medicaid/Medical Assistance. Call 1-800-986-KIDS (1-800-986-5437) or visit pa.gov/en/agencies/dhs/resources/chip to find out if your child is eligible for free or subsidized care.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

These programs help families develop their child's potential. Parents who have questions about their child's development or disability should talk with their family physician, school district, intermediate unit, or county human services department. The CONNECT Helpline, 1-800-692-7288, also can answer questions about child development and specific disabilities or email help@connectpa.net.

SPECIAL KIDS NETWORK (SKN)

SKN assists parents of children and youth with special health care needs. The SKN helpline provides information and resources including education, transportation, housing, medical assistance programs, waiver programs, transitional resources, employment services, equipment and assistive devices, early childhood and child care as well as support and services. To reach the SKN, call 1-800-986-4550 or email RA-DHBFHSKN@pa.gov.

QUALITY DAY CARE SERVICES

These services are important to you as a parent. Select a program that meets your needs and your child's needs. The state's Child Care Works program provides subsidized care for low-income families. For more information about the available day cares in your area and the Child Care Works program, call the toll-free number 1-877-4PA-KIDS (1-877-472-5437) or visit pa.gov/agencies/dhs.