



March/ April 2026

Child Development Today



**“The children are always ours,
every single one of them, all
over the globe ...”**

-James Baldwin

April Observances

April is both National Child Abuse Prevention Month and a time to celebrate early learning through the Week of the Young Child (April 11th -17th). Together, these observances remind us of the critical role early care and education plays in creating safe, nurturing, and supportive environments where children can grow and thrive.

Once again this year, the Child Development Council is coordinating with local libraries during the Week of the Young Child in both Tompkins and Cortland Counties. Throughout the week, Child Development Council staff will be reading stories and hosting activities in the community.

Thank you for the important work you do every day to protect, support, and celebrate young children. Your commitment truly makes a difference. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates on outreach events throughout the month of April, and throughout the year.

Feel free to share activities you did and/or photos (without faces) from the Week of the Young Child to Margaret at margaret@childdevelopmentcouncil.org to be shared on our social media pages.

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naeyc[®] Week of the Young Child

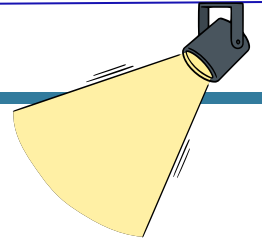


The overarching goal of the Week of the Young Child (WOYC) is to joyfully celebrate early childhood education, emphasizing creativity, play, family, and community. Through daily themed activities centered on art, music, and family stories, WOYC encourages meaningful engagement and fun experiences that honor children, families, and the early educators who make a difference every day. This year it will be celebrated from April 11-17, 2026. It is sponsored by the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#); 2026 marks a historic milestone as NAEYC celebrates 100 years of commitment to young children and the profession.

Daily Themes:

- **Music Monday-** Children sing, dance, and listen to music to develop language and early literacy skills.
- **Tasty Tuesday-** This food-themed day uses cooking together to connect math, literacy, and science skills, while promoting healthy nutrition habits.
- **Work Together Wednesday-** Activities focus on problem-solving and teamwork, as children use various materials (like blocks or natural elements) to build together, fostering social skills and STEM learning.
- **Artsy Thursday-** Open-ended art projects help children develop creativity, social skills, and fine motor skills by making choices, using their imaginations, and creating with their hands.
- **Family Friday-** The celebration wraps up by engaging and celebrating families as young children's first and most important teachers. Activities often involve sharing family stories or traditions.





Spotlight On... Family Services

In addition to the services for child care programs, the Child Development Council offers a Family Services program that provides support to families with young children up to age 5 and individuals who are pregnant. Enrolled families receive parenting support, child development information, developmental and social emotional assessment for children, and connections to community resources to help each family meet their unique needs and goals. Services are

offered through a home visiting model, which reduces barriers to participation.

Specialized support for first-time pregnant individuals in the community is offered through a program called 'Welcome Little One'. Welcome Little One is a series of classes that provide practical information new parents need to welcome their new baby. Topics are explored through hands-on activities and include: feeding, (both breastfeeding and bottle feeding), diapering, car seat safety, and more.

Family Services and Welcome Little One are offered at no cost and are accepting new participants. Reach out to Malinda@childdevelopmentcouncil.org for more information or to sign up.



National Child Abuse Prevention Month: Protective Factors to Reduce Abuse and Neglect

Strengthening protective factors within a family is one way of reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. The five protective factors are:

Parental Resilience: Finding ways to manage stress. Prioritizing sleep and identifying triggers can keep a parent strong in the face of a crisis.

Social Connections: It's nice to have at least three people you can call for different things (one for a laugh, one for advice, one you can count on). You may also find people in groups or classes.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: The Child Development Council's Warm Line (607 273 0259) and NYOCFS's HEARS Family Line (1-888-55HEARS or 1-888-554-3277) are available to anyone with a question about behavior, education, or resources.

Concrete Support in Times of Need: 211 Tompkins Cortland is the most comprehensive source for concrete resources in the community. Available online and by phone.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children: At the heart of the Protective Factors is a healthy caregiver-child bond. The family unit is strengthened when children are able to manage impulses, reducing stress in caregivers. Social-Emotional competence can be practiced by teaching simple calming strategies like "belly breathing" or through collaborative play like in turn-taking games.



“The best way to protect children is to strengthen the adults and communities that surround them.”

-Prevent Child Abuse America

Provider Corner

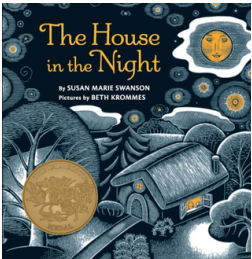
In our November/December newsletter we had a short four question survey. One of the questions was: What would you like to see in future newsletters? One of your answers was to include special acknowledgements.

Please send any special acknowledgements/achievements within your program. We would also love to hear about and see photos of what your program did for the Week of the Young Child.



Bookworm Banter

For Ages 0-2



The House in the Night by Susan Marie Swanson, illustrated by Beth Krommes

There are just the right number of words on each page for infants and toddlers in this Caldecott Medal-winning picture book. The illustrations are striking and beautiful with tones of black, white and grey accented by golden yellow. This magical, whimsical story is perfect for bedtime.

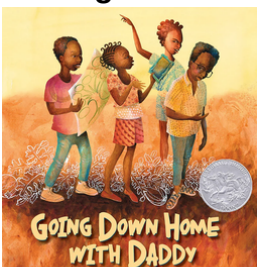
For Ages 3-5



Home for A While by Lauren H Kerstein illustrated by Natalia Moore

This book is heartwarming but does not shy away from the strong feelings a young child would have when entering foster care. Maggie, the foster mother, is patient and kind and most of all respectful of Calvin's feelings, even when he crashes a basketball into a vase or doesn't want a goodnight hug. The story ends on a trusting hopeful note. A gentle story about foster care and belonging.

For Ages 5-8



Going Down Home with Daddy by Kelly Starling Lyons, illustrated by Daniel Minter

'When the sky is still dark with sleep', Lil Alan finally dozes in the back of the car as he travels to the family reunion Down Home. He awakes to see great grandma Granny 'scattering corn for her chickens like tiny bits of gold.' She showers the cheeks of Lil Alan and his sister 'with peppermint kisses'. This Caldecott Honor-winning book is about family, generations, tradition, land, and love. The words and illustrations are gorgeous!

Visual Supports for Routines, Schedules, and Transitions

Visual supports can help children learn new skills and prevent challenging behavior. Visuals help young children learn and follow routines by helping them understand what is happening “now” and what is going to happen “next.” Visuals serve as reminders for verbal directions and help children know exactly what is expected of them.

Visual Schedules

Using a visual schedule at home provides young children with predictability (i.e., they know what activity or routine is coming and when) and consistency (i.e., the schedule of activities or routines is the same). Visual schedules help children know what their day will look like by letting them know when activities or routines will happen.

How to Use

- **Teach your child how to use the schedule** by explaining and demonstrating how to use the pictures.
- **Refer to the visual schedule** throughout the day (e.g., “We just got home, let’s go check your schedule to see what is next.”).
- **Talk about the schedule** (e.g., “Look, you just got dressed. Now it is time for breakfast!”).
- **Make it active!** Teach the child to indicate what is complete. You can have your child flip the card over or remove it from the schedule and put in the “finished” pocket depending on how your schedule is set up.
- **Celebrate!** Be sure to celebrate your success and the child’s success. Acknowledge and provide positive feedback to your child after activities or routines, especially ones that are not as fun (e.g., “You cleaned up! You must be feeling so proud!”)



First/ Then Boards

First/Then boards can be used for a variety of reasons. They can be used to:

- Assist with transition from one activity to another. For example, “First clean up, then play outside.”
- Break routines into smaller steps. For example, “Go to the bathroom and wash hands, then brush your teeth.”
- Encourage children to complete tasks they might not enjoy in order to do a more enjoyable task. For example, “First brush your teeth, then you can have your tablet.”



Growing Healthy Habits with CACFP

Gardening with CACFP

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) supports vegetable gardening and nutrition education through hands-on, meaningful learning experiences.

Planting seeds helps children learn core competencies in science, math, language and social-emotional skills. They learn where food comes from and encourage children to try new foods. Even small gardening projects can make a big difference. Make it fun by choosing a theme such as a **Pizza, Chinese Zodiac (this year is the Fire Horse), or Mediterranean Garden.**

Produce grown on site is creditable!

Fruits and vegetables harvested at your program may be served with reimbursable meals and snacks when CACFP minimum component requirements are met (cups/ounces). Examples include **tomato slices at snack** or **steamed beans at lunch**. These items may also be purchased from local farm stands or farmers' markets.

You don't need a large garden! Many programs grow successfully in **containers, window boxes, or small raised beds**. The **snail roll seed starting method** is a great space-saving option that allows deep root growth. Gardening is also a great way to involve families—share photos, send seeds home, or offer simple growing tips to encourages healthy habits at home.

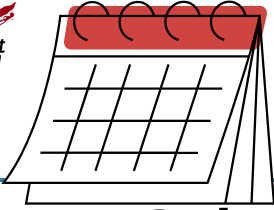
By combining CACFP nutrition standards with seed-to-table experiences, child care programs help children grow healthy—**one seed at a time.**

Remember to reinforce handwashing before and after gardening.

Contact Ruth or Sue if you have further questions about gardening resources at the Child Development Council 607-273-0259 or ruth@childdevelopmentcouncil.org and sues@childdevelopmentcouncil.org

Example of a snail roll seed starting method that saves space, and promotes healthy root growth.





Agency Calendar

Meetings:

March 3rd

Center Directors -10:00am-11:00am

April 7th

Center Directors -10:00am-11:00am

April 7th

SACC Directors -10:00am-11:30am

Resources

Zero to Three (zerotothree.org) regularly updates their online parent resources.

For the latest Cortland area connection go to <https://www.hellocortland.fun/>. In Ithaca, search the events section of (<https://www.ithaca.com/calendar/kids/#!/>).

Concrete resources can also be found online at 211 Tompkins Cortland or by dialing 211 or 1-877-211-8667.

The Center for Resilient Children has a lot of specific information about building resilience and developing protective factors:

<https://centerforresilientchildren.org/home/for-parents/>

<https://centerforresilientchildren.org/free-resources/>

Hometown Happenings

Here's your round-up of free, fun, and family friendly events happening across Tompkins and Cortland counties. Mark your calendars and share with families!

Groton Cabin Fever

Family-friendly celebration packed with hands-on activities for all ages. Meet with local clubs and organizations such as Science Center and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. There will be Crossroads the Clown creating balloon animals, and a bounce house!

Saturday, March 7: 12:00pm- 3:00pm
Location: 400 Peru Road, Groton, NY,

*This is a free event. Contact Groton Recreation Center 607-898-3966 for any questions.



Cortland Free Library

The Cortland Free Library has multiple recurring events in March and April such as Baby/Toddler Time, Preschool story time, LEGO club, and more!

*Call at 607-753-1042 for more information.

Spring Fairy Fest

Visitors of all ages can dress as fairies and enjoy crafts, story time, costume contests, special treats and more. All activities take place inside participating businesses on the Ithaca Commons such as Press Bay Alley, Dewitt Mall, and CSMA.

Saturday, March 21: 10:00am-6:00pm
Location: 118 West Green Street, Ithaca. (Ithaca Commons)

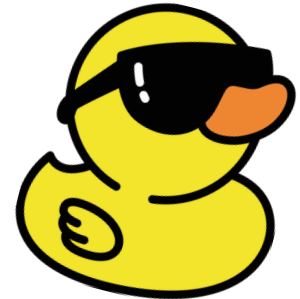
*Free and Open to the public

The Showcase

Free admission, Ice Skating, family entertainment, kids activities, give aways and more!

Saturday, March 21: 10:00am-3:00pm

Location: J.M. McDonald Sport Complex
4292 Fairground Drive, Cortland, NY



Tompkins 4-H Duck Race

There will be up to 3,000 bright yellow rubber ducks tumbling over the Cascadilla Creek Falls at the Cornell Botanic Gardens' Cascadilla Gorge Trail, then bobbing down the creek in a frantic and fabulous race to the 4-H Education Center on Willow Avenue.

Saturday, April 25: 11:00am-4:00pm
Location: Cascadilla Gorge Trail, following down to CCE Tompkins at 615 Willow Ave, Ithaca

*Free to watch the duck race, if you wish to purchase a duck to be in the race Register at <https://ccetompkins.wufoo.com/forms/mk8a0391pwr4as/>

Training Calendar March- April 2026

Date	Time	Location	Title	Description	Instructor	OCFS Categories
3/18	6:30-8:30pm	Zoom	It's Not Just Routine	In this training participants will discuss the challenges and successes that come with daily routines with infants and toddlers. We will discuss toilet training, diapering routines, feeding, and more.	Lisa Potter	1,2,3
4/16	6:30-8:30pm	Ithaca Office	Toddler Temperament	In this training participants will be able to examine temperament tendencies in toddlers and discover a better understanding of their own temperament.	Lisa Potter	1, 3



The Child Development Council is happy to offer convenient on-site training for child care programs. Our Team is available to travel to your program, or provide a Zoom link, and teach one of our many training workshops to your staff. Email or call for a training catalog and applicable fees.

To register for training: call (607) 273-0259 or email training@childdevelopmentcouncil.org

Current Child Development Council Team

Administrative:

Diane Feldman
Margaret Tinker
Melissa Perry
Michael Hoit

Family Services:

Amy Riotto
Ashaneé Brooks
Cassandra Carlton
Elizabeth Wolff
Jessi Soto-Moyer
Ken Cassano
Lisa Bowman
Lisa Drake
Malinda Rees

Child Care Services:

Allison VanGalder
Ann Turcsik
Barb Mechalke
Hannah Behrens
Joanie Slatoff
Lisa Potter
Ruth Williams
Sara Sandritter
Sue Sopp
Vickie Mundy- Hebert

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