CAPITAL AREA CHAPTER

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Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children

CAPITAL AREA CHAPTER OF PENNAEYC

EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE





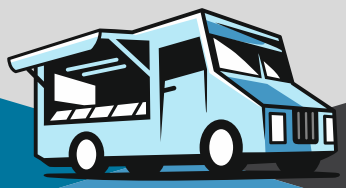
SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2026
7:30AM - 3:30PM

CROSSPOINT CHURCH

430 COLONIAL ROAD, HARRISBURG, PA 17109

Information on where to obtain documentation of your attendance will be included in your conference folder materials. Three (half-day) or five (full-day) DHS and PA Key professional development hours will be awarded to those attending all sessions within your half-day or full-day selection. CEUs are not offered at this event. Pennsylvania Department of Education Act 48 credits will be awarded thanks to ECETA.

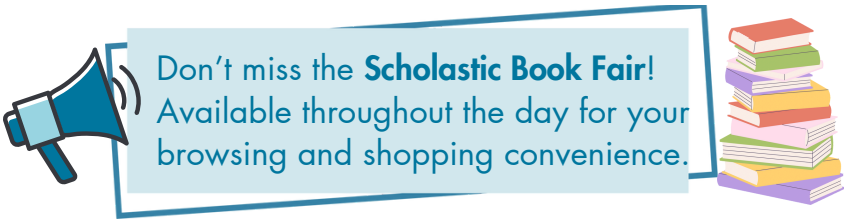
EVERY PARTICIPANT WILL RECEIVE A VOUCHER ($18.00 VALUE) FOR LUNCH FROM ONE OF TWO FOOD TRUCKS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE KEYNOTE SESSION DURING NETWORKING.



Capital Area Chapter of PennAEYC Welcome

The Capital Area Chapter of PennAEYC (CACPennAEYC) is excited to invite you and your colleagues to participate in our annual professional development event for a time of in-person learning and connecting with other early education professionals. The 2026 Annual Capital Area Early Childhood Conference will bring early learning professionals together in Central PA at CrossPoint Church in Harrisburg. Responding to enthusiastic requests, we are excited to once again offer a full-day, in-person conference on Saturday, March 7, 2026. As always, this event is especially designed for early childhood professionals and advocates who work with and on behalf of young children. This year's conference will offer an exceptional selection of educational workshops led by highly qualified instructors, an inspirational keynote speaker, a large assortment of community vendors, and additional resources for up-to-date information on early care and education. Seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis, so be sure to register early! Five (5) DHS and PA Key professional development hours will be awarded to those attending all sessions. Forms for Act 48 credit will be available at the registration table for teachers holding a PA Professional I or II certification. CEUs are not offered at this event. Directions on where to obtain documentation of your attendance will be included in your conference folder materials.

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday, March 7, 2026!



2026 Capital Area Chapter of PennAEYC Governing Board and Committee Chairpersons

President	Suzanne Brubacher
VP of Services	Karla Tarsi
Treasurer	Kathy Stennett
Secretary	Mary Lauchle
Member at Large	Alyssa Hahn, Corrie Mitchell, Pam Blazi, Eric Jones, Meredith Tyrrell, Shavon Johnson, Rachel Lash
Consultant	Allison Hill

Registration Information

REGISTER EARLY: Registration opens January 5, 2026. Online Registrations Only!

Conference space is limited to **150 participants**. Walk-in registrations may not be accepted.

The three morning sessions and three afternoon sessions will be limited to **50 participants per session**.

Registration Deadline: March 2, 2026

Registration must be completed online and paid for at that time.

REGISTER HERE:
https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/2026-cacpennaeyc-early-childhood-conference

Conference fees:

Half-day Non-NAEYC Member . . . $55.00
Half-day NAEYC Member . . . $45.00
3 PD hours: 7:30am - 1:30pm

Full-day Non-NAEYC Member. . . $80.00
Full-day NAEYC Member. . . $70.00
5 PD hours: 7:30am - 3:30pm

Full-Day Group Rate (6 tickets). . . $450.00
5 PD hours: 7:30am - 3:30pm
$30 in savings!

**Every participant will receive a voucher ($18.00 value) good for lunch from one of two food trucks following the keynote session. Lunch vouchers will be distributed at check-in.

Conference tickets are non-refundable, but they are transferable.
In the event that the conference is cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances (i.e. natural disaster, weather, etc.), refunds will be issued after deducting non-reimbursable conference costs.

Keynote Speaker
Jen DeBell



Executive Director
PennAEYC

Raise Your Voice: Impact Through Advocacy is an interactive keynote presentation taking participants behind the scenes of Pennsylvania's budget process, exploring what happens leading up to the passage of the budget and what it takes to get an initiative on the radar of policymakers and across the finish line.

Jen will share practical insights into how advocacy proposals are developed to address unmet needs and the benefits of greater investment in high-quality early care and education. Attendees will learn about different opportunities to advocate with PennAEYC and its advocacy partners —whether they have just a few minutes or more time to commit—and will leave with clear, actionable ways to engage. Designed to be both informative and participatory, the session will highlight how collective advocacy strengthens outcomes for early educators and programs and children and families alike.

Conference Schedule

7:30am - 8:00am . . . . . Check-in/Pastries

8:15am - 10:15am . . . . . Morning Session

10:30am - 11:30am . . . . Keynote

11:30am - 12:30pm . . . . Lunch/Vendor A*

12:30pm - 1:30pm . . . . . Lunch/Vendor B*

1:30pm - 3:30pm . . . . . Afternoon Session

There will be vendors on-site offering a variety of products for sale during the Lunch/Vendor time slots.

Jen is a coalition leader, advocate and policy expert with over 25 years of experience advancing high-quality early childhood care and education and human services in Pennsylvania. She currently provides leadership and daily management of PennAEYC's programmatic work and operations as Executive Director, guiding the implementation of the organization's strategic plan in collaboration with the Board of Directors. Jen serves as the lead spokesperson for PennAEYC with the media, funders and strategic partners. She has played a pivotal role in shaping statewide early care and education advocacy efforts, including the launch of Start Strong PA, a nonpartisan child care campaign, and serving as the co-chair of the Early Learning PA coalition.

Her career spans state government and nonprofit organizations, where she has held senior roles in policy development, government relations and advocacy for children and families and the professionals who serve them. She is proud to have contributed to the efforts resulting in the creation of Pennsylvania's Office of Child Development and Early Learning and enactment of several state laws including establishment of the new Child Care Staff Recruitment and Retention Program. Jen holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Susquehanna University and the Certified Nonprofit Professional credential.

Bronze Sponsors

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CrossPoint Early Learning Center

PRE-K FOR PA
READY TO SUCCEED
AN INITIATIVE OF EARLY LEARNING PA

Community Connections for Children

Soccer Shots®
The Children's Soccer Experience

Early Childhood Education Training Academy
ECETA

Morning Session

8:15am - 10:15am / Please choose only one

1. Creating Playful, Engaging Outdoor Learning Environments (OLEs)

Elizabeth Marcello, STARS Technical Assistance Coach, Community Connections for Children

Through research, photos, and examples, this workshop highlights the benefits of outdoor play in early childhood. Participants explore how OLEs support math, literacy, science, art, and music, then collaborate to create actionable steps for their own programs.

Meets Standard
SQ_3.4.3

2. Teaching Optimism to Young Children

Jenn Wertz, Coaching Team Lead & Quality Coach, Community Connections for Children

Based on the book, "Making Lemonade: Teaching Young Children to Think Optimistically", this training will explain how to teach optimism to children. Optimists tend to be healthier, happier, and more successful in life. And the best thing about it? Optimism can be learned and taught. This session will benefit both you as the teacher, as well as the children you work with by presenting knowledge about optimism and suggested activities to utilize in any early childhood education setting.

Meets Standard
SQ_3.4.4

3. Promoting Adult Resilience: Building Your Bounce

Teresa Beattie, Technical Assistance Coach, Community Connections for Children

We know daily stress is high in early learning classrooms, which can have a negative impact on educators and the children in their care. Using strategies from *Promoting Adult Resilience: Building Your Bounce* and *Conscious Discipline*, participants will develop a resiliency plan to build their bounce and find joy in teaching.

Meets Standard
SQ_3.4.4

Afternoon Session

1:30pm - 3:30pm / Please choose only one

4. Behind the Scenes: How Staff Sometimes Contribute to Challenging Behaviors

Karen Rucker, ECE Master Trainer, RespectingChildren.com

Often, challenging behaviors are the product of multiple factors that may not be readily apparent, including the grown-ups in the program! Join us as we go beyond the surface of behaviors in search of potential root causes in the classroom.

Meets Standard
SQ_3.4.5 OR SQ_3.4.9

5. Bridging Connections within Childcare

Jennifer Poole, Blended-Age Mental Health Consultant, IECMH/PA Keys
Lauren Walter, Blended-Age Mental Health Consultant, IECMH/PA Keys

This presentation explores the vital role of collaboration in childcare programs and how meaningful connections with children, families, school districts, and the wider community can enhance early childhood education. Participants will examine strategies for building inclusive partnerships that honor cultural diversity, represent the voices of all families, and reflect the unique identities of the communities they serve. Through a focus on shared responsibility and empowerment, the session will highlight how programs can become powerful hubs of support, bridging families and educators to create nurturing, culturally responsive, and educationally rich environments for young learners.

Meets Standard
SQ_3.4.5 OR SQ_3.4.9

6. Understanding Generational Differences in the Workplace

Rose Snyder, PennAEYC

In this session, we examine how people respond differently as a result of their birth year and cultural/generational age band. We will examine Baby Boomers through the youngest generation in the current workforce.

Meets Standard
SQ_3.4.5

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