



Children's Therapy Connection

Washington Health System Children's Therapy Center

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The Power to Change Children's Lives

Medicaid & CHIP
Changes.....1,7

Miss Karen's OT
Activity Corner 2

CTC Stars.....3

Occupational
Therapy.....4

Physical Therapy....5

Kids Fest5

Speech Therapy.....6

CTC information.....7



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childrens-care/childrens-
therapy-center/](https://whs.org/care-treatment/childrens-care/childrens-therapy-center/)

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Medicaid & CHIP Changes

End of Continuous Coverage for Medicaid & CHIP

**Only applies to children with
Medicaid or CHIP insurance.**

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) has announced that April 1st, 2023 will mark the end of continuous coverage for Medicaid and CHIP. **After April 1, 2023, DHS will return to normal, pre-COVID, eligibility processes.** This means that all Medicaid and CHIP recipients must complete an annual renewal to see if they are still eligible for coverage. **If your child has Medicaid or CHIP insurance as a primary or secondary insurance, please watch for the renewal notification and complete it as soon as you can to avoid a loss of coverage which could result in you receiving a bill for uncovered services.**

What is continuous coverage and why is it ending?

In March 2020, the federal government allowed states to keep Medicaid and CHIP coverage open regardless of eligibility as part of COVID-19 pandemic relief. Pennsylvania continued to send annual renewal packets during this time, but most people did not lose coverage for changes in income or for not completing their renewal.

A federal law passed in December 2022 stating that as of April 1, 2023, DHS must end Medicaid and/or CHIP coverage if a person does not complete their renewal or if they have income or other changes that make them ineligible for Medicaid or CHIP at the time of their renewal.

What does this mean for you and your child if they have a CHIP or Medicaid insurance plan?

You will get a renewal packet in the mail when it is time to renew your child's CHIP or Medicaid plan. You must complete it by the due date listed on the packet.

What do I need to do now?

The best thing you can do now is make sure your address and phone number are up-to-date in the DHS system so that they can send you important information about your child's coverage.

You can update your information by contacting the Customer Service Center at 1-877-395-8930 or reporting it online through your COMPASS account.

When do I have to renew my child's Medicaid/CHIP benefits?

Everyone's renewal date is different. You will start to get information about your child's renewal about 90 days before it is due.

(Continued on page 7)

Miss Karen's OT Activity Corner

With the unpredictable weather we have had, it is tricky to determine whether family activities should take place indoors or outdoors. In the event that we have more typical winter weather, here are a few fun indoor activities for the whole family!

1. Snowflake Salt Artwork

Materials: Blue or black construction paper, Craft glue, and, table salt



First, draw snowflake designs on construction paper.



Then, trace snowflakes w/ craft glue. Next, pour salt along the snowflake drawing and then discard the excess salt. Let dry overnight. The results are a fun tactile craft to display for some seasonal decor.

This activity requires utilization of fine/visual motor skills and hand strength for applying the glue, and some modulation to pour the salt in the appropriate amounts.

2. Winter Themed Movement Break

Materials: Open area, carpeting/yoga mat

Movement breaks provide fun opportunities to break up the sedentary time spent when snowed-in. The following movements, with some imagination, bring the outdoors inside! These movements help improve motor coordination and provide proprioceptive input as well.

Vertical Snow Angel - First, stand up straight w/ feet together and arms down w/ hands at your side. Next, jump to create a star shape (similar to a jumping jack) arms straight out horizontally, and feet spread apart - hip distance. Now, repeat.

Sled riding - Start by laying on the floor on your stomach (in prone as you may hear therapists say). Next, press the upper half of your body up off of the floor - just like the Cobra yoga pose. Now, lower back down to the floor, and repeat.

Imaginary Ice Skating - Place books or pillows in a zig zag pattern on floor. Stand at one end of the pattern and jump landing on your Right or Left foot, depending on which side the obstacle is on. While doing this, balance and pump your arms, then proceed to jump to the next obstacle. Continue until you reach the end of the path.

3. Self Love Craft

Materials: card stock, marker, packaging tape or laminator, scissors, single hole punch, string/ yarn/ribbon, and thumbtack or 3M type hooks



With Valentine's Day approaching, demonstrating positive affirmations and acts of self love are wonderful ways to boost self esteem and confidence. The following activity is a fun decoration not only for Valentine's Day but can be displayed all year long.

First, start with tracing a heart shape on card stock or construction paper. Next, cut out the hearts and write applicable messages. Then laminate the shapes or apply strips of tape to fortify the cutouts. Next, use a hole punch to create a hole, then, thread ribbon or yarn through the hole. Lastly, tie a knot and the pendants are ready to hang. They can be hung anywhere and can also be used to construct a fun mobile, get creative!



CTC Superstars!

Speech Therapy Jackson Shallenberger



Jackson (Jackie) is now communicating functionally! Jackie has worked through some real challenges over the past year with illness, and has come out on TOP! Jackie is also starting to talk to us with his voice! Jackie has a therapy dog who is AWESOME like him. Jackie enjoys the swing during his session and he LOVES our marble wall, he is writing and cutting paper like a champ and as a growing boy he loves plenty of snacks. Miss Megan and Miss Leanna are very proud of his accomplishments!

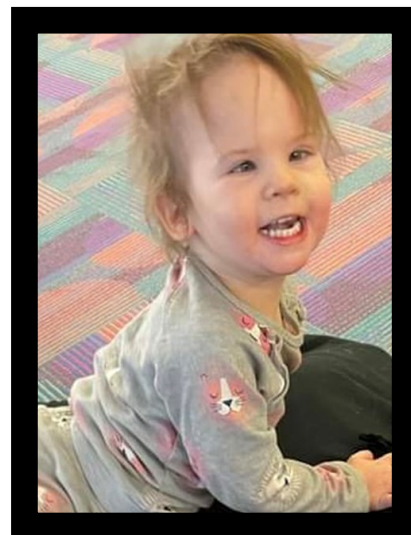
Occupational Therapy Evelyn Stilwell



Evelyn has been working very hard in OT. She has come so far lately in her fine motor and visual motor skills. She is now able to complete puzzles, string beads, and color. She is following directions easily now and interacting so much more with her therapist! She loves Peppa Pig and singing songs while she works! Miss Amanda is so proud of everything you have accomplished! You are doing great things!

Physical Therapy Cassie Kelley

Cassie Kelley is our PT star. She has been working so hard and making amazing progress since starting physical therapy. She is pulling to stand, cruising along furniture and taking steps with assistance. She is taking steps in a posterior wheeled walker with help to steer. We are so proud of all of Cassie's accomplishments and determination. When she is not hard at work at therapy, she is having a blast at home with her animals and family. Great Job Cassie, keep up the



Occupational Therapy

Let's Get Outside!

Submitted By: Theresa Phillips, MOT OTR/L

Winter in Pittsburgh can feel like it will never end. We all know that “first warm day of the year” feeling can’t be explained. Getting children outside is important on so many levels. Whether it is outside playing in the yard, riding bikes in the driveway, or playing on a play ground, many developmental skills can be addressed.

Visual perception, which is how your brain translates what your eyes are seeing, can be targeted while playing outside. A few activities that you can do while enjoying the fresh air include:

- Playing “I Spy”
- Playing catch
- Playing a game of memory with objects from nature

Sensory processing is a huge part of kids playing outside. Think of all the sights you see, things you smell, and sounds you hear as soon as you step outside. As an OT, I encourage you to let your kids get messy! As a mom, I encourage you to have towels ready before your kids go inside the house or in the car. Here are some ideas to incorporate sensory play:

- Engage with the various textures of grass, trees, dirt, or mud.
- Various swings and slides
- Jumping



Bilateral coordination, the act of moving both sides of your body at the same time in a controlled manner, is a key component when playing outside. Some bilateral coordination activities are:

- Riding a bike
- Scaling a rock wall
- Running while playing tag



Attention to task and following directions comes into play when kids are outside. There is an added element of distraction when kids engage in following direction games while outside, which can make it a bit more challenging for the kids but it is great practice! Some fun ways to work on listening skills include:

- Playing Simon says
- Making an obstacle course
- Playing red light, green light

There are countless numbers of wonderful playgrounds in the area. One way to find specific details about each playground is to utilize the app called Playground Buddy! You can search for playgrounds near you with such breeze. This app allows families to narrow down their search by location but also by features of the playground. It informs you if there are handicap accessible swings, picnic tables, shade, and much more. You will even be able to find out if there are bathrooms available and sometimes will get parking information.

So, let's do it! Let's get outside and let the kids embrace the warm weather days!

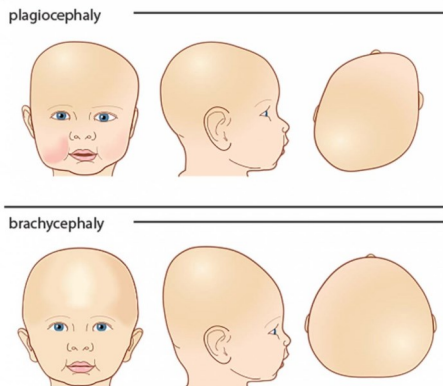
Physical Therapy

Cranial Orthosis

Submitted by Carley Weis, DPT

What is a cranial orthosis?

A cranial orthosis, also known as a cranial helmet or cranial band, is used to help mold a baby's head into a round and symmetrical shape. A baby may benefit from a cranial orthosis when the back of their head is flat or one side is flat.



What is the age window for a cranial orthosis?

A baby's brain and skull growth is 3/4 done by the time a child is two, so the earlier a child receives a helmet the more success they will have with reshaping their head.

How do you get a cranial orthosis?

The first step is talking to your child's pediatrician. Then, you can schedule an appointment with an orthotist to have your child's head measured to determine the exact shape and need for a cranial orthosis.

How can physical therapy help?

A physical therapist can provide education on repositioning techniques. They can also help with determining the underlying cause, which could be muscle weakness or tightness. A physical therapist can help with strengthening your child's muscles, repositioning and facilitation of age appropriate developmental skills. Below are things to try at home!

1. **Tummy time:** This position will help to strengthen your baby's neck, trunk and shoulder muscles. It is very important a child spends time on their belly to not only build strength but to also relieve pressure off their head.
2. **Supported sitting:** You can support your child in sitting to allow pressure relief from their head and also start to build neck strength.
3. **Side lying:** When supervised by an adult, position your baby on their side to relieve pressure off the back of their head.



Kids Fest

Where: Washington Crown Center

When: Saturday, March 18, 2023

Time: 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Kids Fest is a free, fun-filled day of activities for the whole family. The day features an interactive singalong plus meet & greets from Royal Princess Engagements, an educational presentation from Wild World of Animals, the Mascot Mashup race, local non-profits providing resources for families, healthy activities, shopping and more!

NEW this year, Kids Fest is proud to introduce the Children's Entrepreneur Market to the event.



CTC is excited to participate in this event!

Speech Therapy

Stuttering Versus Cluttering

Submitted by: Krista Wycinsky, SLP Graduate Student, Penn West University

We all experience typical disfluencies when we are speaking from time to time. Maybe we forget what we were saying mid-sentence, repeat a word here and there, or add interjections such as “um” and “like”. These are typical for all of us, but some individuals experience atypical disfluencies, such as repetitions of parts of words, prolonging a sound for an extended period of time, or have trouble getting a word out. Other individuals talk may use an excessive number of interjections or run their words together frequently. When these atypical disfluencies continuously occur, we refer to them as fluency disorders.

Most people are familiar with the term “stuttering”. According to the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA), stuttering typically begins between the ages of 2 and 6. Examples of atypical disfluencies that may interfere with expressive communication and social interactions include:

- Sound repetitions: “I w-w-w-want a snack”
- Word repetitions: “I want-want-want-want a snack”
- Prolonged sounds: “I want a sssssssnack”
- Blocks: “I want a (pause) snack”

Individuals who stutter may also experience secondary behaviors. These could include head nodding or eye blinking. Secondary behaviors often begin as an attempt to reduce their stuttering, but do not work as a long-term solution. While being nervous or stressed does not cause stuttering, these negative behaviors can exacerbate a person's stutter. Being excited or feeling rushed can have the same affect.

Treatment for stuttering often focuses on how significantly the disfluencies are affecting the child's communication and daily life. Treatment could include direct strategies, which would assist in

modifying the stutter, or indirect strategies, which would help make talking easier for the child and help them “stutter easier”.

Another fluency disorder that is less widely known is cluttering. Cluttering is characterized by ASHA as speech that is rapid or has an overall irregular rate, atypical pauses, adding an excessive number of interjections (such as “um” and “like”), collapsing of syllables (where two syllables are combined into one syllable during speech), and lack of awareness of moments of disfluent speech. These disfluencies typically lead to communication partners having a difficult time understanding the speaker. One key difference between stuttering and cluttering is the level of awareness the individual has around their disfluencies: people who stutter are often hyper aware of their errors, while people who clutter are often unaware of their errors. Treatment for cluttering includes bringing awareness to errors. Slowing rate, monitoring speech, speaking with clear articulation, and checking in with the listener to see if they understand are all strategies that can assist with cluttering.

Both stuttering and cluttering can be assessed and treated by a speech therapist!

Please feel free to contact the SLP department if you have any concerns or questions,
724-942-6100.

References:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Fluency disorders*. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/fluency-disorders/>
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CTC Information

Social Media

Follow Washington Health System
on Facebook!



Freedom Transit

Families of CTC may be eligible for reimbursement of travel to the Children's Therapy Center. If your child receives Medical Assistance call 1-800-331-5058 to inquire whether you qualify for this service.

To view the reimbursement form:
https://www.freedom-transit.org/forms/MATP-Reimbursement-Form-5_26_16.pdf



Health Insurance

We only learn of your child's insurance changes by you informing us.



Please inform the front office of any changes ASAP to avoid financial issues.

**WHS is proud to partner with
Washington United Way**



Medicaid & CHIP Changes

(From page 1)

NOTE: Not all renewals will be sent right after April 1, 2023. The process of doing everyone's renewals will take 12 months, so be on the lookout for your packet when it is your turn to renew your coverage.

How can I complete my Medical Assistance renewal once I get it?

There are 4 ways for you to complete your renewal.

- 1) Complete the forms that are sent to you and mail them back in the envelope included in the packet you will receive; or
- 2) Drop your completed forms off at your local County Assistance Office <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/CAO-Contact> or

- 3) Complete on the website dhs.pa.gov/Compass or
- 4) Complete by phone by calling 1-866-550-4355.

What happens if you do not return your renewal forms?

If you are no longer eligible or you do not return your packet, you will receive a notice in the mail telling you when your child's Medicaid or CHIP coverage will end.

If your child's Medicaid or CHIP coverage ends, you will be financially responsible for any services provided to your child during the period of non-coverage. You can reapply for Medicaid or CHIP at any time.