

# THE CONNECTION

The latest news and updates from Child Care Connections

## TEMPORARY CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Apply Now!



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## Temporary Child Care Assistance for Certain Health Care Workers

One-Time only child care assistance is available for certain healthcare employees through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Applications can be submitted now. Funding is limited and applications are processed on a first-come-first-serve basis starting December 1, 2021.

For more information about Child Care Assistance for certain Health Care Workers, visit:

[cccmontana.org/best-beginnings-scholarship/](http://cccmontana.org/best-beginnings-scholarship/)



## Bundle Up!

As Montana starts to see temperatures below freezing, it's important to make sure children are dressed safely for outdoor play! When the temperature is at 9° or below with windchill, the risk of getting frostbite is significant.

When extreme cold weather hits, children should be wearing face coverings, hats, gloves, boots, and lots of layers to keep out wind and wet snow.

More info at [info.childcareaware.org/blog/winter-and-holiday-safety-tips-for-child-care-providers-1](http://info.childcareaware.org/blog/winter-and-holiday-safety-tips-for-child-care-providers-1)



or scan

## CCC Office Closures

**December 24:** Christmas Eve  
**December 27:** Christmas (observed)  
**December 31:** New Year's (observed)  
**January 17:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day



## STARS Child Care Providers

The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is a voluntary quality rating improvement system for child care providers. STARS programs are supported through incentives and support from early childhood professionals.

As a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, we offer resources and support for STARS programs through coaching, technical assistance, professional development, and STARS kits. We are committed to supporting providers and increasing their quality of care, at no cost to you.

Are you looking to become a STARS provider? We are here to help you! Reach out to our Provider Services staff today.

Visit: [cccmontana.org/provider-resources/](http://cccmontana.org/provider-resources/) or call (406)587-7786

## December Harvest: Lentils



Montana is the top producer of lentils in the US, producing almost 40 percent of lentils grown nationwide!

### Jeanne's Lentil Soup

- 6 Servings

#### Ingredients

- 1 1/3 cups dry lentils, rinsed and checked for stones
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 celery stalk, sliced 1/2 in. thick
- 1 carrot, sliced
- 1/2 onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 3/4 lb ham

#### Preparation

- Bring water to a boil. Cook lentils in water, strain, and set aside.
- Saute celery, onions, and carrots until tender.
- Add ham and garlic and saute for one minute.
- Add lentils and remaining ingredients to stew pot and cook for 2 hours

Are you a child care provider? Learn more about the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) on our website. Or scan here:



#### Harvest Literacy for kids:

- *Lentil Soup*, by Joe Lasker
- *First Peas to the Table*, by Susan Grigsby
- *How Peas Grow*, by Joanne Mattern

## Play and Grow: Follow the Leader



**Preparation:** Plan a time for a walk outside or a trip to the park. You can even play right inside your house.

### Introducing the Activity:

- “Today, we’re going to play Follow the Leader!” First, I will be the leader, you will follow, then you will be the leader and I will follow. We must do whatever the leader does, this is going to be fun!
- “Follow me!” (Walk in a silly way, and get creative).
- “Now it's your turn, I will follow you”

You will want to play back and forth several times, making things fun and engaging by acting out different movements. Be creative! Big steps, little steps, slow walking, speed walking and have fun with it!

**Adapting the Activity:** With younger infants and toddlers, you can play games like Pat-a-cake, and This Little Piggy. Try different ways of playing the games with you going first, then the child going next.

Using the follow the leader concept, hide behind furniture or doors and play peekaboo, clap hands, and bang blocks to see if your child will do the same.

With older children, this activity could be adapted by riding bikes, climbing the play structures, and even jumping or skipping.

Have fun and get creative! Follow the Leader is not only great for fine and large motor, but for our imagination as well!

## Emergency Preparedness: Holiday Safety



Decorating is such a fun way to get into the holiday spirit, but emergency rooms see thousands of injuries from holiday decorations every season.

When decorating your home:

- Keep potentially poisonous plants away from children (*mistletoe, holly berries, amaryllis*)
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled "fire-resistant".
- If using a live tree, cut off 2 inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption, water regularly, and remove it from your home when it is dry.
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, do not block doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable or small ornaments on lower parts of the tree where children can reach them.
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave your home.

For more holiday safety tips, visit:

[www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/holiday](http://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/holiday)

