

The Circuit

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Special-needs kids need special attention at holiday
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The sights, sounds and smells of the holiday send some kids into circuit overload. Here are ideas for making it through family time this season.

Create a visual schedule for your child noting what the plan is for the day. Include times they will have to wait, such as presents are opened after Grandma arrives, time for free play with choices listed and when mealtime will be. Keep it where they can see it and refer to it throughout the day. This is especially important for transitions.

Fill your child's stocking with morning-friendly food items. Granola bars, breakfast cookies, fruit and nuts are all things your child can eat the moment they open their stocking, plus the different textures of crunchy and chewy will help keep them calm throughout the day. If you have guest or visiting other people, make a "Quite Time Pack." Put your child's favorite toy, DVD, stuffed animal, weighed blanket, earphones or MP3 player, and a favorite snack into a bag that is easily transported or readily available at home. When your child feels overwhelmed or just anxious, he will have what he needs at the ready to retreat to a quiet zone. Even in the middle of Christmas chaos, try to keep up with your child's sensory needs. What they crave and want to avoid needs to be addressed.

Grandparents Advice

Helen Nickelson, says that as a grandmother of three boys with many different needs, she has come to realize that her life with her grandchildren doesn't look like the one she first imagined. She says it may mean on holidays that some of the children are at the table barefoot, wearing sweatpants, standing instead sitting, or eating peanut-butter-jelly sandwiches without the crust and skipping the turkey. She gives this advice for other grandparents: Believe your daughter or son when they tell you what challenges their child or children face and what accommodations they need. Learn everything you can about your grandchild's diagnosis. If you have a better understanding of what your family is dealing with, you will be able to be more supportive. Understand that your child and the rest of the family may not be able to come to your home for holidays because the trip would be nearly impossible for your grandchild. Understand that your grandchild has a meltdown, it is much different than a fit and is not the result of bad parenting or lack of discipline. If possible, take the kids for an afternoon, a night, weekend or longer so your daughter or son can get away, relax and recharge.

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Top 10 Tips for Buying Toys for Children with Special Needs

MULTI-SENSORY APPEAL

- Does the toy respond with lights, sounds or movement to engage the child?
- Are there contrasting colors?
- Does it have a scent?
- Is there texture?

METHOD OF ACTIVATION

- Will the toy provide a challenge without frustration?
- What is the force required to activate?
- What are the number and complexity of steps required to activate?

PLACES THE TOY WILL BE USED

- Will the toy be easy to store? Is there space in the home?
- Can the toy be used in a variety of positions such as side-lying or on a wheelchair tray?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

- Can play be open-ended with no definite right or wrong way?
- Is it adaptable to the child's individual style, ability and pace?

CURRENT POPULARITY

- Is it a toy that will help the child with special needs feel like "any other kid?"
- Does it tie in with other activities, like books and art sets, that promote other forms of play?

SELF-EXPRESSION

- Does the toy allow for creativity, uniqueness and making choices?
- Will it give the child experience with a variety of media?

ADJUSTABILITY

- Does it have adjustable height, sound volume, speed and level of difficulty?

CHILD'S INDIVIDUAL ABILITIES

- Does the toy provide activities that reflect both developmental and chronological ages?
- Does it reflect the child's interests and age?

SAFETY AND DURABILITY

- Does the toy fit with the child's size and strength?
- Does it have moisture resistance?
- Are the toy and its parts sized appropriately?
- Can it be washed and cleaned?

POTENTIAL FOR INTERACTION

- Will the child be an active participant during use?
- Will the toy encourage social engagement with others?

The toys featured in the Toys"R"Us Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids have been selected and evaluated by the National Lekotek Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to making play accessible for children with disabilities. For assistance in selecting toys or play activities for a child who has disabilities, please visit the Lekotek website at www.lekotek.org.



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10 Cold Weather Safety Tips for Kids

By Amy Zerello

The season you either love — or love to hate — is in full swing. Whether you're out and about with your family braving the elements, or getting cozy at home, don't let cold-weather fun snowball into a safety hazard. Keep your kids protected with these tips.

1. Maintain a sunny disposition. The season's frigid temps shouldn't fool you — snow reflects more than 75% of the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays. Don't stow away the sunscreen during winter; use it to protect kids' faces before they go out to play.

2. Keep snug like a bug — but not too snug. Winter wear should fit kids properly, but gear shouldn't be so tight that it restricts movement. This is particularly true for footwear. Too-tight boots constrict blood flow, causing feet to become even colder. When sizing shoes, allow room for an extra pair of socks.



3. Be clever about clothing choices. When sending kids off to school or out to play, make sure they're dressed warmly in layers that are wind- and waterproof. If possible, opt for wool instead of cotton. This durable and flexible material is an excellent insulator that will help keep kids dryer and warmer than cotton, which is quick to absorb water. Help your little ones stay warm with adequate head, face, hands, and neck protection. You can save time while getting your brood out the door by storing gloves and scarves inside hats.

4. Get around safe and sound. Driving in winter can be dangerous, so you should make sure you're ready for any situation. Prepare your car for such emergencies by keeping the following must-haves in your trunk: a first-aid kit, blankets, shovel, rock salt, ice scraper, water, and nonperishable snacks.

5. Practice safety when playing winter sports. Always supervise your child's winter activities. Ice skating should only be done on ice that has passed proper inspection. Sledding paths shouldn't be too crowded or too close to roadways. The safest sleds are those that allow for steering, so avoid snow tubes or disk-shaped sleds. If your little ones want to try skiing or snowboarding, consider getting lessons from an instructor. While out on the slopes, they should always wear helmets and gloves with built-in wrist guards, and be accompanied by an adult.

6. Serve superior snacks. Good nutrition can help kids fight off cold and flu season, so strengthen their immune system with a balanced diet. Snack time is a great opportunity to sneak in some extra nutrients; try dried and fresh fruits, sliced raw vegetables, whole-wheat crackers with cheese, and yogurt.



7. Keep them hydrated. Although your kids may not be sweating as much as they do in warm-weather months, they still need to keep hydrated. Smart choices for winter are low-sugar juices that are high in vitamin C, which studies show can lessen the severity and duration of winter colds. Decaffeinated tea and hot cocoa are also wise picks — these [comforting hot drinks](#) are a great source of antioxidants, which are believed to strengthen the immune system.

8. Make your home a safe haven. Be prepared for unpredictable weather conditions by stocking up on essentials, such as extra batteries for flashlights, bottled water, first aid staples, and nonperishable food items. [Safety kits](#) can help protect your family in extreme situations.



9. Get your kids prepared. Make sure your kids have an extra pair of gloves and tissue packs tucked into their book bags. These necessities will help prevent the spread of germs, and come in handy if a glove goes missing.

10. Heat your home safely. Before temperatures fall below freezing, make sure your home's heating equipment and your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors function properly. If you own a space heater, keep it away from small children or, better yet, don't use one at all. And don't forget to discuss fire safety with your family each winter; the likelihood of indoor fires increases during the colder months, according to the National Fire Protection Association.



****Applications for 2011-2012 LIHEAP season are available beginning Nov. 1, 2011.**



The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as LIHEAP, helps low-income families pay their heating bills. LIHEAP is a grant that offers assistance in the form of a cash grant, sent directly to the utility company, or a crisis grant for households in immediate danger of being without heat.

How to Apply: There are three different ways you can apply for LIHEAP, online, on paper, or in person

You can apply for the LIHEAP benefits online by using [COMPASS](#). COMPASS is the name of the website where you can apply for LIHEAP and many other services that can help you make ends meet.

For more information, please contact your [local county assistance office](#) or contact the LIHEAP hotline at **1-866-857-7095**, Monday through Friday (individuals with hearing impairments may call the TDD number at 1-800-451-5886).

Crisis Grants: **The crisis program is open beginning Nov. 1, 2011.

Crisis Exception program

Households without heat may qualify for additional help. To be considered "without heat":

- The main heating source or second heating source (a source that is used to operate the main heating source or used if the main heating source is not working) has been completely shut-off;

OR

- A household has almost run out of their supply of main heating fuel (coal, fuel oil, kerosene, propane, wood, etc.).

Households in need of a Crisis Exception grant should contact their [local county assistance office](#).

Regular Crisis program

Additional money may be available if you have an emergency situation and are in jeopardy of losing your heat.

Emergency situations include:

- Broken heating equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced
- Lack of fuel
- Termination of utility service
- Danger of being without fuel (less than a 15 day supply) or of having utility service terminated (received a notice that service will be shut off within the next 60 days)

Assistance with home heating crisis situations will be available 24 hours a day; in most counties, you should contact your [local county assistance office](#). However, residents of the three counties listed below are encouraged to directly contact their local agencies that operate the crisis component in their areas:

- **Allegheny** - Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 1-800-851-3838;
- **Luzerne** - Commission on Economic Opportunity of Luzerne Co., 1-800-822-0359;
- **Wyoming** - Commission on Economic Opportunity of Wyoming Co., (570) 836-4090.

Home heating costs are a big part of your budget. Combined with increasing food and could be very difficult. Pennsylvania is doing everything it can to provide financial help to pay home heating bills and weatherization expenses, but making sure you have the resources to outlast winter starts with you. With a little planning and a little knowledge, you'll be protected from the cold and your heat can last all winter.

The Pennsylvania [Public Utility Commission](#) has many resources to help keep individuals and families warm during Pennsylvania winters, visit their site to learn more.

If you live **outside of Philadelphia**, visit the \$1 Energy Fund at [www.dollarenergy.org](#) or contact your utility company for information on programs that may help you pay your utility bill.

If you live **in Philadelphia**, visit the Utility Emergency Services Fund (UESF) at [www.uesfacts.org](#) or call (215) 972-5170 for information on a program that may help you pay your utility bill.

Essential Fall Checklist for Families with Children with Disabilities

It's time once again to replace screen windows for glass, stock up on hot chocolate, and prepare for the change of season. To help you get back into the spirit of winterizing your home, we've compiled a checklist of some of the most important to-do's. Utility expenses are more costly for families with children on ventilatory support in the home. Here are some tips to help cut down on utility costs this winter and to be prepared for winter emergencies.

Remember to...

Install carbon monoxide detectors near all combustion appliances. [The American Lung Association®](#) recommends detectors with digital displays because they are easy to read.

Change the batteries in smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Most of these safety devices require a fresh pair of batteries at least once a year. But it pays to do your homework, so consult the manuals.

Replace the furnace filter. A clean filter will improve the flow of air, which will make your home more temperate and help to lower utility bills. (The ALA recommends changing furnace filters every two months, or as required by the manufacturer.)

Check the dryer vent to ensure that the plastic housing is tight and that the flap swings freely.

Arrange for a professional to inspect all fuel-burning appliances, such as your furnace, hot water heater, fireplace, and gas range. The ALA recommends annual inspections of all fuel-burning appliances to safeguard against carbon monoxide poisoning.

Replace the screen windows with glass! And while you're out there, remember to **inspect storm windows** for cracks, holes, or signs of wear and tear. Consider hiring a professional if storm windows look like they are in need of serious repair. You may want to consider **covering windows with plastic** to help keep the heat in. **Repair damaged or worn caulking or weather-stripping** on windows and doors to lock heat in and keep cold air out.

Close the damper on your fireplace. Of course, open it while a fire is burning.

Remove obstructions that might clog gutters and downspouts and **Make sure that downspouts are sufficiently sloped** to carry water away from your home's foundation. (The ALA recommends a five percent slope.)

If you have a setback thermostat, use it. It automatically lowers the temperature when you are away from home, and boosts temperature when you need it. Believe it or not, it takes less energy to warm a cool home than to maintain a warm temperature continuously. A setback thermostat can cut heating costs as much as 75%!

Reverse the switch on your ceiling fans. When the air is blown upward, toward the ceiling, heated air (which naturally rises) is forced back down into the room without causing a draft.

Have your car winterized and ready for emergencies. Check the antifreeze level. Have a tune-up, replace or re-gap the spark plugs and change the oil. Check the wiper blades and add washer fluid (don't use antifreeze to wash your windshield). Check tires (to prevent over-inflation, don't add air when tires are cold), and check tailpipe for obstructions to prevent carbon dioxide build up in the closed car. Keep blankets, warm clothes, bottled water, a bag of your child's emergency medical supplies, a bag of sand or cat litter, and a shovel in the trunk in case you get stranded. The extra weight in the trunk will add traction.

Assume that it will be an extremely cold winter with lots of snow. Being prepared for the worst prevents unnecessary tragedies. If you winterize in advance, you'll have more time and less frustration to share fun winter activities with your family.



Special Kids Network System of Care

The Special Kids Network System of Care Program focuses on children and youth with special health care needs. Family Health Nursing Services Consultants from the Pennsylvania Department of health work with and within communities to address the barriers and challenges families experience when trying to access services for their children. The program works at four different levels: *Community Systems Development *Community Mapping *Statewide Initiatives *Outreach

Who are Children with Special Health Care Needs?

Children and youth with special health care needs are those who have or are at increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, and emotional conditions and who require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.

Community System Development

Community systems development activities help communities address the needs of children and youth with special health care needs and their families. The Consultants assist by: *identifying where and when services are missing; providing assistance to develop and expand services; *building coalitions to address issues and concerns; *including children, youth and their families in shaping programs and policy.

Community Mapping

Community mapping helps build a common understanding to the strengths and needs in the community by identifying what is available. It explores how children and youth with special health care needs and their families fit in the community. This information assist in making informed decisions and program planning.

Statewide Initiatives

Statewide initiatives target topics usually identified by parents and service providers as issues for children and youth with special health care needs and their families.. These issues are then addressed at the local, regional and statewide levels.

Outreach

Outreach activities support awareness and understanding of children and youth with special health care needs. Consultants are available for presentations, distributions of materials at local meetings, events, and conferences.

Special Kids Network System of Care

Family Health Nursing Services Consultants work throughout the state to assist families of children with special health care needs. To locate a consultant to assist your community, call us toll free @ 1-877-986-4550 or TTY 1-877-986-5432

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Car Seat Fitting Stations

With so many kinds of vehicles and safety seat models on the market, it's easy to understand why installing and using car seats properly is complicated. That's why free Car Seat Fitting Stations are available. When you go to a car seat check, a technician will work with you to show you the best way to install and correctly use your child safety seat.

Free Car Seat Fitting Stations are held periodically in most areas. They are usually scheduled at convenient times and locations and are free. Some are on evenings or weekends, and they are often held at car dealerships or in store parking lots. At some checkpoints, car seats may be available for a small donation. If you can't come to a car seat check, you may be able to contact a child passenger safety technician by telephone (and sometimes e-mail) with your questions. Check this NHTSA web site to locate a car seat [fitting station or a technician near you](#).

Every maker knows the best way to install their own car seats. Always carefully read your car seat's instruction manual plus your vehicle owner's manual. Bring both with you when you go to a checkpoint, as well as your child to learn the best way to restrain her.

Changing seats as your child grows

You often first learn about safety seats when you bring your infant home from the hospital. Most hospitals require babies to go home in one. When your baby outgrows her rear-facing infant seat she will need to switch to a convertible and/or forward-facing seat and finally, to a belt-positioning booster.

Read your vehicle owner's and new car seat instruction manual each time your child moves to a different type of seat and consider attending a car seat check each time you make a change. You can keep up with the latest news by [checking websites](#) that provide the most up-to-date information on child passenger safety.

Cabs giving wheelchair users a lift

By Daniel Rubin

Henry Gooden's power chair died the other day on South 16th Street, about a half-mile short of his apartment in the Scottish Rite Towers. When his chair ran out of juice, Gooden was outside the 274 Apartments. He figured he was stuck.

Of the nation's 10 biggest cities, only Philadelphia has no taxicab that can give a lift to a person who uses a power chair.

That's what Gooden thought, and why not? It's been that way forever. At least he had the good fortune to get into trouble outside the building of David Goldstein. The doorman started making phone calls for Gooden, who has been in a chair for the last 20 of his 64 years, since he lost his right leg because of a car accident. Relatives couldn't help Gooden. Neither could police. The first cab company that responded had no way to lift the 200-pound power chair into the trunk.

Then a passing cabbie told the men of a new player in town, a powder-blue and maroon Freedom Cab van, specially equipped for wheelchairs. A few minutes later, Billy Goodman pulled up to the curb. In the front passenger seat rode Everett Abitbol, co-owner of the cab company. They opened the back gate, fastened two hooks to the front of Gooden's chair, hit a switch, and drew him into the back of a new Toyota Sienna.

"I'm glad they came," Gooden says of his Nov. 8 ordeal. "I'm glad they have the service."

How did the city finally do the right thing for people who use power chairs and can't wait for Para transit?

The Philadelphia Parking Authority in October allowed Abitbol to pilot a program to put one wheelchair-friendly van on the streets and use a different system to dispatch and process credit cards. He wants a fleet of 20. Oct. 17 was Freedom's first day in motion. Three days later a second company, Capital, put a wheelchair-accessible van into service as well.

Parking Authority officials say they have long been trying to bring such vans to the city. But approval took time, said Jim Nye, who heads taxi enforcement, because the new cabs wanted to use dispatch systems different from the one that enjoys an exclusive contract here. That conflict is being worked out, Nye said. I can't help but think a lawsuit moved things along. In July, a federal suit by advocates accused the Parking Authority of violating the Americans With Disabilities Act by not providing cabs for those in wheelchairs.

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Medication Safety Tips for Parents

Medication safety is very important. Medicine can help your child get well or control a condition. But it can also harm your child if it is not given correctly. These tips will help you partner with your child's healthcare team during appointments, hospitalizations, discharges or transitions, and at home so your child is given medication safely.

Before you go to the doctor or hospital:

- Keep all of your child's medications in a portable container (like a lunchbox) and bring them along to each primary and specialist outpatient visit, and hospitalization. Include vitamins, herbal and dietary supplements, homeopathic medications, as well as all medications you buy without a prescription such as Tylenol, Motrin, allergy medicines, antacids, laxatives, etc. (These are also called over-the-counter drugs.) Bring the spoon or cup you use to give the medicine.
- If the medication is given intravenously (by IV), write down the name of the medication and who prescribed it, dose (including milligrams or milliliters), dosage schedule, strength, purpose, color (see-through or cloudy), size of the bottles and the date the prescription was filled.

When you're at the doctor's office or hospital:

- Show the members of your child's healthcare team—which includes nurses, doctors and therapists—the medicines you brought (prescription and over-the-counter), and give them the written note about any medicines you couldn't bring. That way it's easy to review all the medicines together at every visit.
- Tell the healthcare team about medication allergies or any problems your child has had with taking medicines.
- Asking questions, whether you are at an appointment or in the hospital, is the best way to understand the medicines your child takes. Questions to ask:

When is the medication taken (dosing schedule)?

What form does the medication come in (pills, liquid)?

Does the medication interact with other medications for food?

What are the possible side effects of each medication? When should you stop giving it? When should you call your healthcare provider?

Why is this medicine being prescribed for your child? What should the medicine do (will you see changes)?

Are there special instructions for storing, preparing, measuring and giving each medication?

Ask them to show you how and give you written instructions to take with you.

- Will this prescription need to be refilled? How do you get a refill prescription (call the office, email your child's doctor or nurse)?
- How will you know if the medication has gone bad or expired?
- Ask your healthcare provider to observe you, your child's caregiver or the patient prepare and give the medicine to make sure it's being done right.
- If your doctor or nurse sends the prescription electronically to the pharmacy or calls it in, ask for a hard copy or printout of your child's medication list with the new medicine highlighted. If the prescription is written by hand, read it back to the prescriber to clarify.
- Know your insurance coverage for medication (co-pays for generic or brand-name medicines) and other supplies needed to give the medication (needles, nebulizer). Be honest if you can't pay for it. Your healthcare provider may know if there are alternatives that work just as well for your child but cost less.
- If your child is hospitalized, he may be given his usual medicines in a different form. Ask the healthcare team to explain. Try to use the same pharmacy system (CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid) when your child is away from home.

Ask the pharmacist about tools or aids that will help make medication timing and dosage safer and easier. This could be special flavors, daily or weekly medication boxes, or charts to track when you've given medications.

- Before you leave, double check the new medicine against the written copy of the prescription or medication list to make sure you were given the proper medicine and strength.

When you are home:

Store medications as directed.

Before giving medicine, always check three times to make sure you are giving correct medication and correct dose. Review any instructions the healthcare team or pharmacist gave you. With older children, have them read the medication name and dose back to you.



Happy Birthday

October

Michael Berkey 10/28/06
Rayan Bessi 10/1/10
Steven Brown 10/6/09
Christopher Cavage 10/18/01
Francesco Di Lauro 10/3/90
DeAngelo Palmer 10/23/07
Coralys Sanchez-Luna 10/8/05
Mason Hickerson 10/8/04
Hanford Jennings 10/30/07
Hoyt Landis 10/11/03
Jeremy Lugo 10/21/04
Rebecca Melvin 10/25/02
Andrew Gingras 10/3/02
Arthur Gravatt 10/22/98
Daniel Grinage, Jr. 10/14/92
David Grinage 10/14/92
De'aujah Howard 10/17/02
Michale Kinskey 10/19/92
Maleah Prince 10/1/07
Stasia Richardson 10/11/98
Jeffery Stover 10/29/96
Rocco Yanssen 10/7/08

November

Jason Breen 11/16/90
Jazmaine Brown 11/13/91
Jeremiah Cruz 11/1/08
Addison Evans 11/11/10
Mark Ewing 11/5/00
Javier Pacheco, Jr 11/21/08
Brittany Baez 11/21/91
Brianna Cummins 11/23/93
Caroline Elhadj 11/27/02
Sara Fisher 11/25/92
Matthew Freitas 11/10/98
Savannah Glaspie 11/5/08
Marco Giovengo 11/23/89
Jakareon Graham 11/13/06
Johnathan Ramsey 11/9/93
Gabrielle Tucker 11/27/01



December

Noberto Cora 12/20/02
Brodie Engle 12/28/04
Brian Kendter 12/4/94
Rachel Soud 12/23/02
Alexa Deal 12/3/02
Ava Dundon 12/4/09
Caroline Elhadj 11/27/02
Alexander Mathews 12/6/04
Luke Mirolli 12/31/03
Jacob Clontz 12/8/00
James Hastings, Jr 12/18/07
Austin Manz 12/6/98
Emily Olup 12/25/01
Austin Schwirian 12/16/02
Silas Werner 12/28/09



Happy Holiday's
From
VACHP



The Circuit

Parents

Please Remember:

- ◆ For Quarter 3 (Jan. Feb. Mar.) there will be **40** hours respite care available.
- ◆ Respite hours are **NOT** to replace the hours that should be covered by the agency through your insurance.
- ◆ Parents are the employers of respite care providers. The VACHP is only the funding source.
- ◆ Respite paperwork must be mailed to the office. We cannot accept hand-delivered paperwork to the offices.
- ◆ We will not process incomplete paperwork for payment. Please review all paperwork for completion of information and required signatures before sending to VACHP

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