

Making Connections

Spring Edition 2022

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WV ABLE

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A Word From Our Director

Hello! My name is Rachel Hamner and I've had the pleasure of working with MountainHeart Community Services, Inc. & West Virginia Birth to Three Region 5 and Region 6 for the past 18 years! I currently live in Buckhannon, WV with my two littles, Gabe (12) and Addie (9). We also have two kitties, Archie and Arlene. We enjoy watching movies, going to concerts, and going on walks together. During the past two years we've experienced some major turn over in both of our Regions. I'm so happy to report that we are now fully staffed ☺ I also wanted give a quick thanks to all of our Practitioners in both RAU's. The past two years have been quite difficult, for everyone. Our amazing Practitioners have worked tirelessly to ensure we were able to continue to provide services both virtually and face-to-face. They're truly the backbone of our program. If you would ever like to chat about your child, family, or services you are receiving, please feel free to reach out to me in the Elkins office at 304-637-2844.



Hannah Myers
Clerical/Data Entry Specialist
WV Birth to Three RAU #5

Hi! My name is Hannah. I'm a wife, mom of 3, and am expecting number 4! My son has level 3 autism with Global Developmental Delay, and we have been involved with Birth to Three since he was just 18 months old. During the week I work for RAU 5 as the Clerical Data Entry Specialist but on weekends I enjoy spending time with my family taking day trips, exploring, and enjoying as much time being present with my babies as I can.



Tiffany "TJ" Short
Interim Service Coordinator
WV Birth to Three RAU's 5&6

Hello, my name is Tiffany, but please call me TJ. I live in Clarksburg with my cat Gigi.

I started working for WV Birth to Three in January. I am excited for this new journey and look forward to working with our BTT team and families.



Alexia De Piano
Interim Service Coordinator
WV Birth to Three RAU #5

Hello! My name is Alexia De Piano and I am a mother, wife, and am now working part-time as an interim service coordinator. I love all of my roles in life. I live in Bridgeport with my family and have been a part of the birth to three community for 2 years. I love everything about this community and am very passionate about helping everyone. I have a Bachelors degree from Fairmont State University. My background consists of social work, special education, and now birth to three. I am eager to meet new faces and learn new things about kiddos and their families daily. Helping others is what keeps me going.



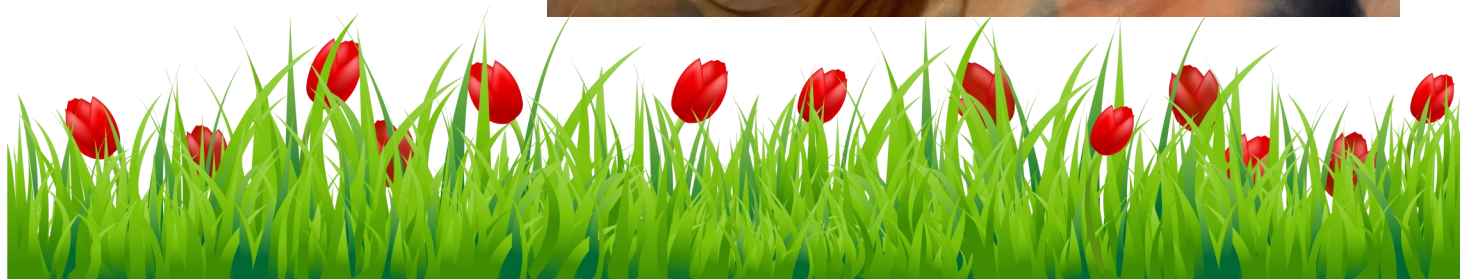
Angela Hinchman
Clerical/ Data Entry Support
WV Birth to Three RAU #5

I am a wife to Jeff for 26 years. I am a mother to a Daughter Hayley she is 24 years old and to a Son Jeffery he is 20 years old. I have one Grand-child Lincoln and he is 2. I love to camp and spend time with Family and Friends. I love spending time with Lincoln every day.



Crystal Knight
Interim Service Coordinator
WV Birth to Three RAU #5 & 6

My name is Crystal Knight. I am an ISC in regions 5 and 6. I am from Webster County where I live with my husband, son, and dog. I have a Master's Degree in psychology. I have been part of the birth to three family for about 5 years, and I have been in this position for 2.5 years. In my down time, I love reading, crafting, traveling, and spending time with my family. I love getting to know others and helping in any way that I can.



April Waybright
Parent Partner
WV Birth to Three RAU #5

Hello, my name is April Waybright. I am the Parent Partner with region 5. I have been married for 25 years to Mike. We have two adult children with special needs. Our daughter Brooke 23 and son Rusty 19. We also have one grandson, Hunter who is just turning one. I enjoy listening to music, reading and camping. My life has been focused on helping others from being a Certified Nursing Assistant to community service and now to assisting families with needed resources and supports. This job and my family are what bring me JOY! I look forward to assisting people in any way.

Jossie Spencer
Interim Service Coordinator
WV Birth to Three RAU #6

Hello, my name is Jossie. I am an ISC with Region #6. I have three great teenagers.

Two adorable dogs and two aloof cats and a turtle. I spend my down time either reading or going to music festivals and concerts. .



Amy Knapp
Parent Partner
WV Birth to Three RAU #6

Hi, my name is Amy Knapp and I'm the Parent Partner for RAU 6. I have been working for Birth to Three since 2012. I started out as Parent Partner and transitioned over to data entry in 2015. I have just recently transferred back to the Parent Partner position. My first involvement with Birth to Three was three weeks after my daughter was born with spina bifida in 1995. I credit so much of my daughter's successes throughout her life to the Birth to Three Program. Not only did they help me teach her how to walk, talk, run, jump and play; they taught me how to advocate for her in the school system and with various physicians. I have passed that knowledge on to my daughter who now advocates for herself in every aspect of her life.



Jaimie Turner
Interim Service Coordinator
WV Birth To Three RAU #6

"Hi y'all!

My name is Jaimie Lynn Turner and I'm an ISC with RAU 6. I grew up in Ronceverte WV and returned to my hometown in 2016 after graduating from WVU with a MSW degree. I've always been passionate about pursuing a career with a purpose and making a positive difference in the world. As an ISC with WVBTT, I feel I'm fulfilling those goals and consider myself lucky to work for such a wonderful program. Outside of work, I'm a dog mama to the sweetest Siberian Husky, Akasha Esme. She truly is my world."



Tiffany Dauwel
Clerical/Data Entry
RAU #6

I am new to Birth to Three, my position is Clerical/ Data Entry at RAU 6. I am from Organ Cave, WV. I am married with two children. Some things I enjoy are spending time with family, camping and attending sports events for my children.





Rituals & Traditions That Nurture Strong Families – Surviving the Family Vacation

We all love vacations – including children. Vacations give children something much more than a location and something far more important: Connection with you! Usually, parents are more relaxed, more fun, more emotionally available. It's common for kids to say that their favorite summer memory is something simple and free of charge, like lying on a blanket looking at the stars with the family. These sweet pleasures are the golden experiences that shape rich childhood memories.

But vacation can also be stressful. Kids often stay up late, get disconnected from parents, and melt down from the overload. Of course, parents often experience their own version, whether from extended family tensions, grandparents judging their parenting, or logistical pressures. So, the first rule for a restful vacation is to find a way to restore your own peace when you get off balance and avoid tears and tantrums. Here are tips to help you manage life during vacation so you can maximize the joy and minimize the tears.



1	Before you leave	<p>Give plenty of warning about upcoming events so they know what to expect. Before traveling with young children, you might make a little book to show them what will happen each day. Your book doesn't have to be fancy -- print out photos on loose-leaf paper and put them in a 3-ring binder. Or, you can have kids who love to draw create a picture of what will be happening each day to add to your book. This helps them both enjoy the anticipation and conquer any fears. And seeing those smiling faces in advance helps them warm up more quickly to relatives they don't see often.</p> <p>Coach your kids about the social behavior you expect. Role play with them in the car before you arrive, or make a game of it before you go:</p> <p><i>"In the hotel hallways, we use inside voices, and we don't run. Why do you think that is?"</i></p> <p><i>"What do you when Uncle Norman wants to hug you hello?" (Don't force kids to hug if they don't want to but teach them to offer a hearty handshake instead.)</i></p> <p><i>"What if you don't like the dinner that's served?"</i></p> <p><i>"When you want to leave the table, how do you ask?"</i></p> <p><i>"The airplane is like a flying village with everyone close together, so there are special rules to be safe and considerate. Let's see if we can guess what they are... It can be hard to stay in your seat...what do you think you could do on the plane if you get bored?"</i></p> <p><i>"What will you do if the cousins start arguing?"</i></p>
2	Traveling	<p>Flying?</p> <p>plan to arrive early enough that they get to "run" a bit in the airport hallway after sitting still in the car and before sitting still on the plane.</p> <p>Make sure to change diapers and use the bathroom just before boarding. If you use overnight diapers (more absorbent), you might get lucky and avoid diaper changes on the flight.</p> <p>Bring small wrapped "presents" – books, treats, chapstick, puzzles, simple crafts – for each child. Kids can look forward to getting one as soon as they've buckled their seat belts, and more whenever you need a distraction mid-flight.</p> <p>Blue painter's tape always comes in handy, too -- you can make a tic-tac-toe board on the tray table, use it for crafts, tape up blankets around his seat to make a cozy fort, and even make a hopscotch board in the airport while you're waiting.</p> <p>Be sure to bring bottles, sugar-free lollipops or something else to suck on during take-off and landing if your child isn't nursing (sucking on anything will help equalize the air pressure on those tiny ear drums.)</p> <p>And even if you don't usually use screens with your child, it's smart to have movies downloaded and at the ready so your child has something to watch even if there's no wifi on your flight.</p> <p>Driving?</p> <p>Plan time for extra stops to allow little ones to move</p> <p>Overnight diapers might eliminate potential accidents when you cannot stop quickly</p> <p>Those same "presents" shared above will work here too, along with snacks and downloaded movies too</p>

3	<p>Once you are at your vacation spot</p>	<p>Keep kids on their usual schedule as much as possible Kids need the security of familiar routines. They get stressed by unfamiliar events and what feels to them like chaos and unpredictability. Do what you can to keep them on schedule and be patient when they get hyped-up or irritable.</p> <p>Plan no more than one event per day What you want to avoid, of course, is racing around, getting stressed out by a busy trip that includes lots of meltdowns, and returning home in need of a vacation. Kids tend to get cranky and stressed with travel and schedule changes, so plan to do less. You'll all enjoy it more.</p> <p>Have age-appropriate expectations - A young child can't be expected to sit quietly while you enjoy a fancy dinner. If you're doing a lot of visiting with adults, be sure the kids have something to occupy them. Even if you usually have dinner as a family, vacations are a great time to feed kids early-- less pressure on the kids to "behave" at a table of adults, and the adults can enjoy a chance to talk at dinner. Remember, you need to recharge your own batteries, too!</p> <p>Physical Activity Be sure your schedule includes plenty of visits to the playground or other opportunities for the kids to get wild.</p> <p>Down time Kids need downtime, just to chill out, snuggle, and do whatever relaxes them. If they don't get it, they can't really be blamed for melting down when the over-stimulation gets to them. Make sure every day includes a little downtime with your child's favorite activity to help him regroup.</p> <p>Soothing activities for little ones ...that work for most kids:</p> <p>Sand play - Put some sand in a lasagna pan on the deck, add small figurines, vehicles, and a strong spoon for digging.</p> <p>Water play - At the beach or lake, of course. But even on a back deck with a spaghetti pot of water. For variety, add ice cubes, paint brushes, sponges, plastic water pitchers. Toddlers love to "paint" the deck or wash the picnic table.</p> <p>Bubbles. You'll have to help the little ones, but all kids love bubbles and blowing bubbles reduces stress. You can easily make your own bubble mix (Add 3 Tbsp of Glycerine and 2/3 cup of dish soap -- Joy & Dawn are best -- to a gallon of water.) Any twig with a loop of yarn can be used as a bubble wand.</p> <p>Clay- If you're in a rented space on vacation, limit clay to a tray, pan, or outside. But clay, sculpey or playdoh is a wonderful, tactile way for kids to knead and pound out the stresses that inevitably accompany all new experiences.</p> <p>Plan time with you</p> <p>Snuggle with your child every morning before getting out of bed. It's very grounding for kids to connect with you and review how the day is expected to unfold -- even if it will be a lot like yesterday.</p> <p>Your kids may be chasing the older cousins, but they still want, and need, time with you. This is a perfect opportunity to turn off your cell phone and see what an inspired parent you are when you have a chance to relax and revel in just being alive. Spend five minutes in the water with your child. You'll be amazed how much more alive -- and connected to your child -- you feel after a five minute water fight. And how much more willing your child is when you need their cooperation.</p>
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4	Mealtimes	Watch your kids' food intake in the midst of too many treats and hyped-up schedules Many tantrums originate from hunger. And all parents recognize the sugar high that sends kids bouncing off walls and then crashing into tears. If necessary, speak with others in advance about limiting treats. And carry small protein-rich snacks with you so your child doesn't have a melt-down while the adults are negotiating where to go to dinner.
5	Bedtime	<p>Schedule decompression time before bed – bring some favorite, comforting books from home. And don't forget stuffed animals and blankets!</p> <p>White noise machines can be invaluable both to keep kids sleeping longer in the morning, and to block out the sound of adults and older kids carousing, so little ones can settle down.</p> <p>Bring black out curtains to keep your child sleeping longer in the morning and to help your child settle on those summer evenings when the sun is shining so long.</p>
6	Take Care of You!	<p>Don't try to work on vacation -- this is family time. Forgo organized evenings in favor of family board games and keep your focus on connecting rather than sight-seeing or structured activities.</p> <p>If friends and family criticize your parenting...Parenting in public is always hard and kids are often not at their best when they're out of their usual routine and schedules. Stay calm, smile, and acknowledge the other person's concern. Then do whatever you can to address their concern. Don't worry, this is just a case of conflicting needs, not a referendum on your parenting.</p> <p>Manage yourself so you can stay calm - You're on vacation with your child or children, so this is by definition a "working vacation." And traveling is stressful for everyone. But remember that your kids depend on you not only to regulate their environment, but also to help them regulate their moods -- so you need to maintain a state of well-being yourself. Besides, you deserve a vacation too! Make sure you take this opportunity to trade off child care responsibilities with other adults, if possible, so you get a chance to replenish your own spirits. You're never too old to have a summer vacation you'll always remember.</p>

Adapted from Aha! Parenting (n.d.) Family vacation survival guide. Retrieved from <https://www.ahaparenting.com/read/Summer-Family-Activities-Vacation>.





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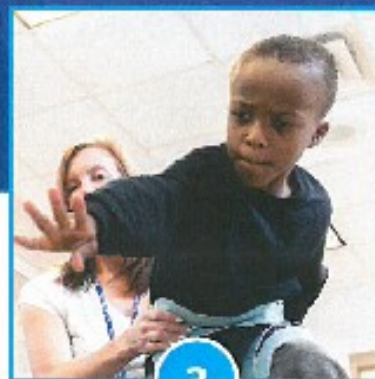
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Road Trip Scavenger Hunt for Preschoolers

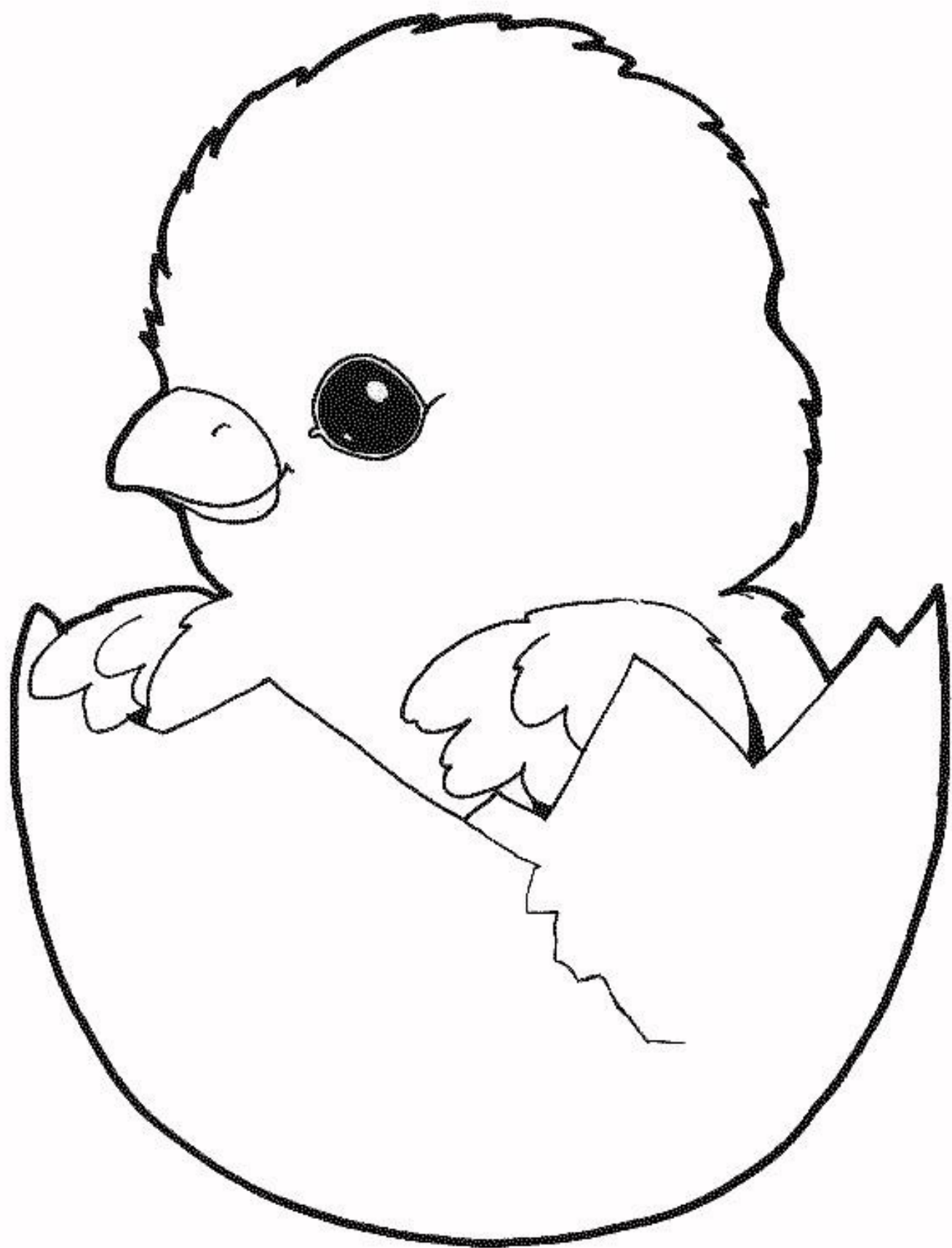
Scavenger Hunt

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[Printable Car Games for Kids from Momsminivan.com.](http://www.momsminivan.com/print-scavenger-preschool.html)

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