



# Herkimer County Children's Center

*Bridging the Gap for a Brighter Future*

Did you know that the health of children in rural communities lags behind their non-rural counterparts? With high rates of disability among Herkimer County youth and a shortage of quality childcare options, it's time to take action. Introducing the Herkimer County Children's Center, a transformative initiative dedicated to the well-being and development of children in our community.

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Research suggests that early childhood experiences can have profound and cascading effects on the outcomes of children. We believe in providing supportive and enriching services for our children, promoting their lifelong well-being.

## COLLABORATION

Although existing social, health, and education systems provide opportunities to support children, efforts by these systems can often be fragmented. That's why we have brought together stakeholders from diverse sectors to create the Children's Center. By identifying at-risk children early and integrating support systems, we can remove barriers and help every child reach their full potential.

## THE CENTER

Strategically located in Ilion, the Children's Center is positioned to serve one of the county's most densely populated and highest-need areas. As such, the center will link families to vital local resources that promote and nurture the healthy development of children.

## COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

At the Children's Center, we will provide developmentally appropriate educational and social experiences while also acting as a bridge between families and community resources. Our range of services will include:

- ✓ CHILDCARE
- ✓ BOCES PRE-K CLASSROOM
- ✓ CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC AND OUTPATIENT SERVICES
- ✓ DEVELOPMENTAL PEDIATRIC SERVICES
- ✓ EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPY ROOM
- ✓ MOHAWK VALLEY DIAPER BANK
- ✓ SYSTEM OF CARE
- ✓ UCP DEVELOPMENTAL PLAYGROUP
- ✓ CONNECTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS HUB
- ✓ PRECEPTORSHIP SITE FOR HERKIMER COLLEGE
- ✓ LACTATION COUNSELING AND SUPPORT
- ✓ CHILDBIRTH CLASSES
- ✓ EFNEP NUTRITION EDUCATION
- ✓ LOCAL FOOD ACCESS SUPPORT



## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Together, let's build a stronger foundation for our children's success! Join us at the Herkimer County Children's Center and be a part of the change.



## CONTACT US

To learn more about the Herkimer County Children's Center and how you can get involved, please contact us at:

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BY JOINING FORCES, WE CAN CREATE A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.





# Herkimer County Children's Center

*A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR SERVICES*

## CHILDCARE

In Herkimer County, the demand for quality childcare far exceeds availability. In response, the Center will offer a nurturing and stimulating environment for the community, with childcare services that prioritize social, emotional, and cognitive growth. We are dedicated to delivering reliable and exceptional childcare that families in Herkimer County can trust. Childcare services will include the following:

- ✓ Two Infant Rooms
- ✓ Two Toddler Rooms
- ✓ Preschool Room
- ✓ School-Age Room

## BOCES PRE-K CLASSROOM

In response to the current shortage of program slots for children with special education needs in Herkimer County, the Center has partnered with BOCES to offer a high-quality Pre-K classroom experience. This esteemed, state-approved educational site seamlessly integrates children with special needs alongside their typical peers, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Additionally, children with special needs can receive vital services such as speech, physical, and occupational therapy. The program curriculum cultivates school readiness by fostering early literacy, numeracy skills, social interaction, and creativity through engaging activities and interactive lessons. As such, BOCES Pre-K prepares children for school and supports their intellectual, social, and physical development, ensuring a smooth transition to Kindergarten.

## PRECEPTORSHIP SITE

The Children's Center plays a vital role as a preceptorship site for Herkimer College, actively addressing workforce shortages in early childhood education. By providing hands-on experience and practical training, we are nurturing the growth of future early childhood education professionals who will remain integral members of our community. This invaluable opportunity allows students to observe child development, foster meaningful relationships with local families, and plan developmentally appropriate activities under the guidance of experienced educators. We are committed to investing in our future early childhood professionals in our community, ensuring a strong foundation for high-quality care and education for young children.

## EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPY ROOM

The Early Intervention Therapy Room at the Center will offer comprehensive services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. By centralizing services at our facility, we can harness the power of small group sessions for therapy. This allows us to efficiently utilize our therapy providers and serve a more significant number of children, directly combating the prevalent provider shortage issue in our region. Our dedicated therapists will now have a centrally located therapy room for evaluations and sessions, thoughtfully equipped with age-appropriate toys and therapeutic equipment. Within this nurturing and engaging environment, therapists can offer both group and individual speech, physical, and occupational therapy sessions. This approach eliminates barriers to accessing these necessary services and empowers infants and toddlers to reach their full potential.

## UCP DEVELOPMENTAL PLAYGROUP

The UCP Developmental Playgroup is designed for children aged 18 to 36 months with developmental delays in various domains. Led by professional staff, the playgroup focuses on enhancing cognitive, communication, social, adaptive, and motor skills. The team not only works directly with the children to support their development but also provides valuable tips to parents and caregivers on how to address their child's unique challenges. This playgroup serves as a child's first positive educational experience, promoting independence and fostering social-emotional growth through interactions with other children. By providing this local option, we can ensure that more children with developmental delays can benefit from the playgroup, allowing them to strengthen their skills and enhance their learning experience.





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*A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR SERVICES*

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## CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

The Mental Health Clinic at the Children's Center recognizes the pressing need for mental health support for children in Herkimer County. Currently, there is a shortage of mental health providers specifically trained to address the unique needs of children in our community. However, our center aims to bridge this gap and improve access to vital services. A comprehensive range of outpatient services dedicated to children's mental well-being will be available at the Center, including assessments, counseling sessions, therapy options, and evidence-based intervention programs such as Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). We are committed to providing a safe and compassionate space where children can openly address their emotional and behavioral challenges. By addressing the shortage of mental health providers and expanding local services, our goal is to enhance the quality of care available to children in Herkimer County, ensuring they receive the support they need to thrive.

## DEVELOPMENTAL PEDIATRIC SERVICES

At the Center, developmental pediatric services will be available for children who require specialized care and attention. We recognize that access to developmental pediatrics is limited in rural communities like Herkimer County, where transportation poses a significant barrier to care. To address this, we will offer telehealth options to ensure that children receive the necessary care regardless of location. Pediatricians and healthcare professionals well-versed in child development will be available, seamlessly integrating concepts from developmental psychology with motor, language, cognitive, and social development. This extensive expertise enables us to recognize red flags for mental health disorders across various developmental stages, ensuring early detection and timely intervention. With both developmental pediatric and mental health services through the Center, we can cover the entire spectrum of developmental needs. Our holistic approach allows us to identify the underlying causes and impacts of developmental or mental health disorders that may present in the pediatric population. Our primary objective is to develop personalized treatment plans tailored to each child's unique needs, supporting their optimal development and overall well-being.

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## CONNECTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IMPACT HUB

The Children's Center will serve as an Impact Center for the Connected Community School initiative, facilitating vital connections between families and a wide range of local organizations, businesses, and agencies in one convenient location. As an Impact Hub, immediate access to food, hygiene supplies, and clothing will be available, alongside personalized referrals and connections to community resources based on each family's needs. The Impact Hub goes beyond regular working hours, ensuring families can access support without taking time off. Co-locating non-profit organizations within the centralized Impact Hub provides space for resources and trainings for professionals who work with underserved and vulnerable populations. Our vision is to create a comprehensive support system where every student, individual, and family finds assistance in one place. In cases where specific resources are not available within the hub, staff will facilitate well-coordinated efforts to access those resources before families leave the Children's Center. Through these valuable local partnerships, the Center will foster a true alignment of community resources, fostering a more prosperous, productive, and healthy community for all.





# Herkimer County Children's Center

*A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR SERVICES*

## **NUTRITION EDUCATION**

The Children's Center has partnered with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to provide valuable nutrition education to families. Through our collaboration, dedicated nutritionists can offer interactive workshops, cooking demonstrations, and engaging hands-on activities to teach participants about healthy eating habits, meal planning, and budget-friendly food choices. We believe in empowering families with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about their nutrition. EFNEP is a federally funded program delivered through Cornell Cooperative Extension, serving limited-resource youth and families. Their hands-on interactive workshops help participants improve food and physical activity behaviors, food resource management, food safety, and food security. The program is facilitated by frontline educators who often come from the communities they serve, ensuring a personalized and impactful learning experience. Additionally, services will be conveniently provided during pickup, allowing us to assist families in efficiently planning their weekly meals. Together, we strive to empower families to make positive changes in their dietary habits and lead healthier lives.

## **LOCAL FOOD ACCESS SUPPORT**

At the Children's Center, we are committed to addressing the crucial issue of food access for families in need. In partnership with Catholic Charities, we will act as a designated pickup location for monthly Food Sense boxes. Recognizing the importance of fresh and nutritious food, we collaborate with local farmers, food banks, and community organizations to facilitate access to affordable and high-quality food options. Our goal is to ensure that every child and family has access to nutritious food, promoting their overall health and nutritional well-being. By providing this vital support, we seek to alleviate food insecurity and contribute to the well-being of our community.

## **MOHAWK VALLEY DIAPER BANK**

The Mohawk Valley Diaper Bank at the Children's Center aims to address the basic needs of families by providing diapers and related items to those who may be experiencing financial hardships. We understand that access to clean and sufficient diapers is crucial for a child's health and well-being. Through this pickup location, we can support families in our community and help alleviate the burden of diaper insecurity.

## **CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION AND LACTATION COUNSELING**

At the Children's Center, childbirth education and lactation counseling services will be available for expectant and new parents in partnership with Herkimer County Public Health. Certified educators will provide comprehensive information and support to help parents prepare for childbirth, breastfeeding, and early parenting. Through classes, workshops, and one-on-one consultations, educators empower parents with knowledge and confidence for a positive and healthy start to their parenting journey.

## **SYSTEM OF CARE**

Housing Herkimer County System of Care within the Children's Center will streamline access to mental health services, creating a centralized location for youth and families to access comprehensive support. System of Care is a complete and coordinated network of community-based services catering to youth from birth to 21 years old and their families. They ensure accessible support for youth facing mental health challenges or at risk of developing them. With a network of dedicated partners, System of Care provides various services, including counseling, peer support, advocacy, psychiatry, medication management, care management, and home and community-based support services. Together, our goal is to help youth and families access the necessary resources and support, fostering their well-being and resilience.

