What Is the EHCA Difference?
We believe it’s our ongoing story of compassion in action. EHCA provides homes, services, and support to individuals who are faced with some of life's most challenging situations. We respect everyone as unique and inspiring people and provide them with the high-quality, individualized care that they deserve.

Is it possible to reduce the incidence of developmental disabilities by designing a program aimed at disability prevention?

Will education, advocacy, and connection to community resources result in safer and healthier home environments?

Can steps can be taken to keep biological families intact and prevent the need for ongoing child protective services?

The answer is yes — through Project First Step.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
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A life full of hope, promise, and care.

EHCA is a private, nonprofit agency headquartered in Erie, Pennsylvania, providing services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Erie, Crawford, and Venango counties. EHCA programs are licensed annually by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Admissions, the provision of services, and referrals of persons for services shall be made without regard to race, color, gender, age, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or limited English proficiency.
The Project First Step (PFS) program provides comprehensive support and family-centered services that are evidence-based and education-informed. The goal is to promote family health, unity, and independence.

PFS works with pregnant women, parents, infants, children, and families to help build stability and structure in the family in an effort to preserve the family unit, promote unification, and ensure children lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Most PFS clients live in poverty and are often dealing with additional stressors of physical or intellectual disabilities, domestic violence, homelessness, drug or alcohol dependency, and/or mental health concerns.

PFS focuses on three targeted outcomes:

- **Healthy Babies** — to maximize the number of babies born healthy and full-term
- **Safe and Healthy Homes** — to ensure that children live in a safe and healthy home environment
- **Preservation and Permanency** — to increase the likelihood that children will reside in their biological home

PFS staff achieves 96% success rate helping mothers with high-risk pregnancies to have healthy, full-term babies.

**Services**

**PRENATAL SERVICES**

- Works with pregnant women with disabilities, those at risk for preterm birth, and/or those at risk for having infants born with disabilities (open referrals, including self-referrals)
- Services provided throughout pregnancy and up to one year postpartum
- High-risk population includes medically compromised pregnancy, drug and alcohol addiction, improper or no medical care, intellectual disabilities, and mental health concerns
- Uses a variety of nationally recognized teaching and assessment tools: infant simulator dolls with evidence-based curriculum, childbirth education classes, and postpartum depression screening

**HOMEMAKER SERVICES**

- Working through referrals from the Erie County Office of Children and Youth Services, staff members in this program educate and assist individuals in order for them to successfully create and maintain safe, healthy home environments for their families.

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SERVICES**

- Serves families that have one or more family members with intellectual disabilities and are at risk of having their children removed from the home. Families in this group deal with additional challenges of mental health concerns, domestic violence, extreme poverty, homelessness, and drug or alcohol use
- In select situations, families who have already had children removed from the home and who are seeking reunification can receive services (referral restrictions apply)
- Service includes parenting videos with evidence-informed curriculum and child/family assessment tools

**FAMILY STABILIZATION SERVICES**

- Serves families within the same population using the same teaching tools as above
- Works to prevent families from needing further caseworker services

**Additional Staff Certifications**

- Anger Management Specialists
- Nurturing Parenting Program Specialists
- National Child Passenger Safety Specialists through Safe Kids Worldwide