

## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD & STUDENT SERVICES



## ECSS

### Dr. Michelle Reichard-Huff, Director

The Director, at the direction of the Executive Director, shall be responsible for planning, administering, and supervising areas of the general administrative and educational functions for the Office of Early Childhood and Student Services (500+ staff members). In addition, the Director will maintain direct supervision responsibilities for Assistant Directors, Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness, Equitable Participation, and Logistics. The Director will lead initiatives specific to mental health mentoring and professional development of supervisory staff, employee engagement, educator effectiveness, school district requests, and human resources.

Other key assignments include: Professional Development Office Contact, BASE Coordinator, PAIU Special Education and Mental Health (PAIUSED) Representative, PDE Liaison, Local Right to Special Education Task Force, and Berks Initiative for School Attendance.

### Dr. Christi Weitzel Assistant Director

#### Early Childhood Services

The Assistant Director of Early Childhood Services, at the direction of the ECSS Director, shall be responsible for the planning, administration, and supervision of all programs serving children in the BCIU's Early Childhood Programs.

These programs include: Pre-K Counts, Preschool Early Intervention, Head Start (State / Federal), and Early Head Start.

The key areas of focus are as follows:

- Early Childhood
- Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports
- Inclusive Practices
- Trauma-Informed Approaches
- Professional Development, Mentoring, and Peer Coaching Programs

In addition, the Assistant Director of Early Childhood Services will be responsible to serve on local committees such as the Berks Early Care and Education Council, and NE Youth Development Task Force.

### Sara George Assistant Director

#### Student Services & K-12 Education:

The Assistant Director of Student Services & K-12 Education, at the direction of the ECSS Director, shall be responsible for the planning, administration, and supervision of all programs serving students in Alternative and School-Age Special Education Services. These programs include: School-Age Special Education (classroom & itinerant services), Alternative Education County Programs, and the Learning Academy at Thomas Ford.

The key areas of focus are as follows:

- Alternative Education Program Expansion
- Transition to Adult Life Programs
- Mental Health Services / Community Liason
- Student Services Collaboration

In addition, the Assistant Director of Student Services will be responsible to serve on local committees / job alike groups such as Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP), Suicide Prevention Task Force, Berks Teens Matter, Student Assistance Program Meetings, County-wide High School and Middle School Principal's meetings, and Berks County Curriculum Coordinators' meetings.

## CONTACT US

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### Shared Responsibilities:

The Assistant Directors will support initiatives specific to mentoring and professional development of supervisory staff, school safety and security, employee engagement, school district requests, and human resources.

The Assistant Directors will work collaboratively to support Office initiatives and cover each other's assignments as needed.

## Preschool Early Intervention

**Elizabeth Angstadt**  
Program Administrator  
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Early Intervention is a public special education service provided to children, who have a disability or are experiencing a significant delay in development. The goal of the program is to provide individualized services to help every child meet their educational needs. This program provides classroom-based and itinerant educational services and related services (e.g. speech, occupational, physical therapies) to students based on eligibility/need. The BCIU services more than 2,500 students, ages 3-5, annually, in this program.

## School-Age Special Education

**Brian Hocking**  
Program Administrator  
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In partnership with the county's public and non-public schools, BCIU works to help students with special needs succeed in school and in adult life after graduation. BCIU's involvement in school-age special education is extensive and varied; it responds to the community's need to care for a population of students who face a wide range of challenges. Classroom programs provide educational programming, such as life skills support and preparation for independent living. BCIU's special education professionals travel throughout the county to provide many related services, including audiological, psychological, sign language interpreting, and more.

## Alternative Education

**Sara George**  
Assistant Director  
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The BCIU provides educational supports and services in the alternative educational settings which include the Berks County Jail System, Tower Behavioral Health Care Facility, and Learning Academy at Thomas Ford, a PDE-Approved Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) program. These programs are designed to meet the educational needs of students considered at-risk due to significant behavioral challenges, mental health needs, and/or drug and alcohol use.

## Berks County Head Start and Pre-K Counts

**Mandy Gerhard**  
Program Administrator  
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Head Start is designed to bring about a greater degree of social competence and to prepare children of low-income families for kindergarten. Head Start is operated primarily through federal funds with state supplemental funds to support additional classrooms. The BCIU serves 695 students, ages 3-5 years, who are living in poverty and meet federal guidelines. In addition to educational programs, Head Start provides comprehensive services in areas of health/nutrition, family engagement, mental health, and disabilities.

The Pre-K Counts Program is a state-funded program that provides high quality pre-kindergarten opportunities at no cost to families. PA Pre-K Counts is targeted to children at risk of school failure, either because of income, language (English is not the first language), or special needs issues. Students served are ages 3-5 years who are identified as at-risk based on state guidelines and eligibility criteria related to income, language proficiency, or other needs.

## Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness / Educational Stability of Youth in Foster Care

**Kristen Hoffa**  
Program Administrator  
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The BCIU provides services and supports to school districts and community agencies through statewide programs designed to breakdown barriers to education for children and youth experiencing homelessness or in foster care environments. The program provides guidance and training to school districts, advocates for educational stability for children and families, and provides resources and referrals as appropriate.

