

# Child watch program opening

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HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College is opening a child watch program to help student parents on campus.

A press release from HCC said the child watch program will allow student parents to drop off their children at the Itsy Bitsy Child Watch Center starting on Tuesday, May 24, on the first day of classes for the first summer session. This free program will offer safe and affordable supervision for children while their parents attend classes or appointments on campus, including appointments for advising, tutoring, support services, or other meetings.

Parents must remain on campus and will be provided a pager in order to be reached at all times by the care staff.

Parents must also be available for their child's personal care including feeding, diaper changes, bathroom help, and behavior management. The program will offer care including nurturing, quality supervision and age-appropriate activities for children age six weeks to 12 years old.

The watch center will be held in the Marieb Building on the first floor in Room 130, the staff is trained and the program

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is pending approval for their license-exempt care model which is designed to only provide short term care for children. It's noted that the program is not licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care, or any other state agency. Though once the center opens it'll be the second community college in the state to offer a child watch service, and it'll be the only one offered in Western Massachusetts.

The release said the pilot phase of the program is being funded by a \$100,000 allocation in this year's state budget as secured by Senator John Velis.

"For parents looking to begin or support their education, finding reliable childcare is always a barrier," Velis said. "This new program will help make a real difference in the lives of so many families, and I am proud I was able to advocate for HCC to receive these funds."

The Director of HCC's Early Childhood Education program Sheila Gould said the center shows that HCC continues to support students and aims to remove barriers to student success however they can.

The release states Leslie Klein Pilder, director of the Child Watch Program is a longtime early childhood educator and recently retired as the executive director of the Nonotuck Community School in Northampton.

"The space looks beautiful and welcoming. The policies and procedures Leslie has designed ensure that our students will know their children will be safe, loved, and have a great time while on campus," Gould said.

The Itsy Bitsy Child Watch Center was inspired by the classic children's book "The Itsy Bitsy Spider" as well as the Itsy Bitsy Zoomcast, a record series on early education that is co-hosted by Gould and Liz Charland-Tait, lead coach of the Strong Start Early Childhood Education Professional Development Center at HCC. The center is fully focused on the care and advisory of young children while they are at the center, just as the program they borrowed the name from is focused on early education. For more information people can look up the program on the HCC website at [www.hcc.edu](http://www.hcc.edu) or call the school at 413-538-7000.