



Community Connection Newsletter

resources for the community

Volume 1, Issue 16



¡Hola! Hablamos español
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THE PATHLIGHT COMMUNITY

Whole Children/Milestones Rec Fall Sessions

Whole Children and Milestone Recreation classes will again be changing it up with new offerings added to the favorites. Registration is open for Fall Session 1, running from September 28-October 31 (dates for Fall Session 2 are November 9 - December 12). Read or download the **flyer** to learn more about the Fall Session 1 classes. To sign up for Fall Session 1 as a returning member, click **here**. If you are new to Whole Children/Milestones Recreation, please contact Jane.Pronovost@pathlightgroup.org for registration forms. Then click on the link above to sign up as a member through the "Parent Portal" (or sign up directly with Jane).

NEW

Family Empowerment and Autism Connections

How is your school experience going? If you would like to connect with some other parents about school topics, check into our new, weekly series, the **Special Education Forum, Families Helping Families**, every Wednesday evening from 8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. The Forum is uniquely for parents and focuses on families helping families, by sharing concerns and problem solving in a safe and supportive environment. Nancy Farnsworth, Education Advocate for Autism Connections, and Karen Serra, Director of Family Empowerment and Autism Connections will facilitate the online conversation. We will keep numbers low each week to allow everyone a chance to participate, so please **register** early if you would like to join the discussion. Read the **flyer** for more information. **NEW**

IMPORTANT UPDATES

Massachusetts Announces Extension of Administrative Tax Relief for Local Businesses September 15 **NEW**

DESE Commissioner's Weekly Update, September 14 **NEW**

Interim CBDS and Supported Employment Service Delivery Approaches - DDS-ADDP Day and Work Reopening Planning, September **NEW**

The 2020 Autism Waiver Program Open Interest Period will be held from October 16 – 31, 2020. Applications will be available on the DDS site soon. Here are the English and Spanish versions of the 2020 application to get you started. **NEW**

Social Security recent Q&A regarding COVID-19 **UPDATE**

COVID-19 Travel Order: requirements for individuals entering Massachusetts

Reminder: Governor's COVID-19 Order #46 (issued August 7, 2020). Third revised gatherings order, which reduced the limit on outdoor gatherings from 100 to 50 and maintained the limit on indoor gatherings at 25.

Guidance on Fall 2020 Special Education Services, from DESE July 30

All updates, emergency orders, and guidance associated with the COVID-19 State of Emergency. **UPDATE**

Are you voting by mail? Get more information HERE.

Important upcoming dates and deadlines

Oct. 24: register to vote

Oct. 28: request a ballot by mail

Oct. 17-30: Mass. early voting

Nov. 3: Election day

Nov. 11: Veterans Day

Nov. 26: Thanksgiving

Dec. 31: Flu shot deadline for students. See Gov. Baker's order here.

Autism Connections, Family Empowerment, Whole Children, Milestones, Whole Selves, Adult Family Care, Shared Living

IMPORTANT ONGOING RESOURCES

Western Massachusetts COVID-19 Case Numbers

UPDATE

Disability Scoop: COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Could Leave People With Disabilities Behind, September 11 **NEW**

Mass.gov: state COVID-19 info **UPDATE**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **UPDATE**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health **UPDATE**

Information and resources to help DDS families **UPDATE**

MA Department of Education **UPDATE**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services CMS

Domestic Violence Resources

Call 211: informational and referral hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days. Interpreter services available in multiple languages.

Massachusetts Crisis Hotlines

Look4help, extensive resources in Franklin and Hampshire Counties

Massachusetts Advocates for Children Hotlines: ENGLISH 617-357-8431 x3224, ESPAÑOL: 617-357-8431 x3237

Small Businesses

New temporary loan resource (until September 27)

Job Loss/Unemployment/Job Fairs **NEW**

Governor Baker Provides Update on \$300 Boost to Unemployment Benefits (NBCBoston.com), September 9 **NEW**

Preparing for and attending a Virtual Career Fair, from the *Social Security Administration*, September 17 **NEW**

CAREERS & the disABLED Virtual Career Fair, September 23 **NEW**

Manufacturing Virtual Job Fair, MASSHIRE, Franklin/Hampshire Career Center, Starts 9:00 a.m Monday, September 28 and ends 4:00 p.m. Wednesday, September 30. **NEW**

Work Without Limits Career Fair-for all individuals with disabilities, September 30, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Pathlight Job Opportunities **NEW**

COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits - from MassLegalHelp

Full unemployment information: call (617) 626-6338 to request weekly benefits, daily from 6 a.m. – 10 p.m. File a claim online.

HEALTH SERVICES

Masshealth Information, **800-841-2900**

PCA services: MassHealth PCA Consumers who have unfulfilled PCA hours and would like to be connected to a local Home Health Agency that can fill those hours, should call MassOptions at (1-844-422-6277) for live support.

MassHealth Prescription services: MassHealth is allowing early refills and 90 day supplies. Contact your pharmacist to order medications.

Telehealth services: Telehealth services are covered by MassHealth. Discuss with your provider for more information.

General Health Related Information

Caring for Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic, from the *American Academy of Pediatrics* **UPDATED**

Health Coverage Helpline: 800-272-4232

Disability COVID-19 Healthcare Support Advocacy Hotline 800-626-4959

Mental Health Resources

Franklin County Crisis Services: 413.774.5411 (CSO)

Athol/N. Quabbin Crisis Services: 978.249.3141 (CSO)

Hampshire County Crisis Services: 413.586.5555 (CSO)

Berkshire County Crisis Hotline: 1-800-252-0227 (Brien Ctr)

Western MA Mental Health Resources, Very complete resource organized by Community Action

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) Navigating a Crisis: You can find the ESP serving your area, by calling 1-877-382-1609 and entering your zip code.

Samaritans is continuing operations 24/7, as always. Call or text their 24/7 helpline any time at 877-870-4673.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-825

HEALTH DISABILITY RIGHTS

Civil Rights, HIPPA, and the Coronavirus Disease

COVID-19 COMMUNICATION RIGHTS TOOLKIT

This toolkit: (1) explains your communication rights; (2)



provides tips on advocating for them, and (3) has an accommodation request form you can bring to the hospital.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU CARE FOR IS SICK

Forms to have on hand for hospital admission of someone with a disability **UPDATED**

- [DPH June 6 guidance](#) (includes the following language: "companions for patients with intellectual and/or physical disabilities are not considered visitors")
- [Covid-19 Disability form](#)
- [Communication First form](#)

[Should I be tested?](#) (from Mass.gov)

[CDC Testing Information](#) **UPDATED**

[Interactive Map of testing sites](#) **UPDATED**

[Caring for someone sick at home](#), from the CDC

[Plain language medical information form](#)

[Healthcare Passport](#)

Critical Care Covid-19 [Communication Chart](#) to help patients communicate in hospital and critical care.

DOCUMENTS FOR SELF ADVOCATES

[A Self-Advocates Guide to Covid-19](#): Green Mountain Self-Advocates have created this toolkit about the Coronavirus written in plain language. **UPDATED**

[What is the Census?](#) A plain language document.

[Plain language sample advocacy letter about patients with intellectual or developmental disabilities having a support person with them when they are in the hospital.](#)

FLU INFORMATION **NEW**

[CDC Information on the Flu Vaccine](#) **NEW**

Athol: Public seasonal [Flu Clinic](#) set for Sept. 23 **NEW**

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Cooperative Public Health Service: [2020 Flu Clinics](#) **NEW**

[Free flu shots at CVS Pharmacies](#), find your location **NEW**

[Free flu shots at Walgreen Pharmacies](#), find your location **NEW**

[COVID-19: A bad flu season colliding with the pandemic could be overwhelming](#), from the *Washington Post* **NEW**

SOCIAL STORIES

[Back to School Online Learning](#), from the Autism Research Institute **NEW**

A wide variety of free school related COVID [Social Stories](#) from *Autism Little Learners* **UPDATED**

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

[USDA Extends Free meals for kids through December 31, 2020.](#) **NEW**

RESOURCES IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Advocacy Boot camp from MFOFC: Aunque la fecha limite para las solicitudes del Campamento de Abogacía ha pasado, todavía estamos aceptando familias que hablan español. Contacta a rdelacruz@fcsn.org si tiene preguntas o necesita ayuda con la solicitud. **NEW**

[Distanciamiento social: Recomendaciones para ayudar a los niños en la escuela](#)

[This social story](#), made for children under 7 and in many languages, communicates important prevention information about the coronavirus without focusing on fear.

<https://www.usa.gov/español/coronavirus>

Mass Advocates for Children [Para familias que hablan español](#)

[Preguntas y respuestas sobre el cierre de la escuela COVID-19](#) [Reuniones del equipo del IEP](#)

[Reuniones del equipo del IEP Una guía paso a paso para usar la telemedicina](#)

[Muestra de Agenda de Reunion Virtual de IEP](#)

[Hacer un plan médico durante el COVID-19](#)

[COVID-19 Fact Sheets in Multiple Languages](#): These materials are reviewed and vetted by physicians and medical school faculty members at the Harvard hospitals and are created in collaboration with Harvard Health Publishing.

[Guía de Asistencia para Beneficios de Desempleo por Pandemia](#)

[Recursos para familias de niños con necesidades especiales que están confinadas en casa](#)

[Federación para Niños con Necesidades Especiales](#)



Autism Connections, Family Empowerment, Whole Children, Milestones, Whole Selves, Adult Family Care, Shared Living

Información de COVID-19 Por y Para Personas con Discapacidades

Special Education Family Resource Toolkit from the Department of Education.

<https://switchboardta.org/blog/a-round-up-of-multilingual-resources-on-covid-19/>

FOOD PANTRIES & OTHER RELATED SUPPORT

Berkshire Food Project

Find a food bank or food distribution site near you [HERE](#), or contact the Food Bank of Western MA at 413-247-9738.

Extra SNAP Benefits: Additional COVID-19 benefits. Call 877-382-2363.

If you or your family is facing hunger right now, Project Bread wants to help. Call the Food Source Hotline at 1-800-645-8333.

Dealing with food allergies at a food pantry.

Dealing with food allergies when eating in a classroom.

SUPPORT FOR THE HOMELESS

Community Action: Call the Community Resources and Advocacy program at 413-475-1570 or 413-582-4237.

HOUSING

CDC Issues Sweeping Temporary Halt on Evictions, September 2 **NEW**

VETERAN SERVICES

What Veteran's Need to Know about Coronavirus, from the US Department of Veteran's Affairs.

HEAT AND ELECTRIC SERVICES

National Grid: call customer service for COVID-19 programs, 1-800-322-3223.

Eversource; Learn more [HERE](#).

Las respuestas a las preguntas frecuentes están disponibles en español.

Fuel assistance; Call 413-552-1548 (press 1 for English, 2 for Spanish and then 4 to speak with a live person).

INTERNET/PHONE DISCOUNTS

MassHealth Directory of Internet and Phone discount programs. There may be updates to this information.

GENERAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Could Leave People With Disabilities Behind, from *Disability Scoop*, September 11 **NEW**

The Pandemic Has Researchers Worried About Teen Suicide from *NPR*, September 10 **NEW**

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) **NEW**

COVID-19: Recommendations for People with Down Syndrome to Safely RE-enter into the Community, from *Mass General Hospital* **NEW**

Federation for Children with Special Needs: Excellent education resources related to COVID-19 **UPDATED**

Franklin and Hampshire County Resources from *Community Action*

Franklin County/North Quabbin COVID-19 Wi-Fi and Personal Care Resources.

Greater MA Special Needs Events **UPDATED**

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: extensive toolkit with specific need-based resources

LEGAL RESOURCES

Community Legal Aid provides free civil (noncriminal) legal services to low-income and elderly residents of Central and Western Massachusetts. (resource is in English and Spanish)

Disability Law Center: Know your rights

Mass Legal Help: A variety of resources about your rights during the COVID-19 breakout.

TRANSPORTATION

Registry of Motor Vehicles: general information. **UPDATED**

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority **UPDATED**

FRTA - Franklin Regional Transit Authority **UPDATED**

PVTA - Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (Hampden and



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Hampshire Counties): [Service Update](#). Call 413-781-7882 for more information. **UPDATED**

CHILDCARE

[Expanded Family and Medical Leave](#): Parents and caregivers of DDS eligible children and adults may be eligible for expanded family and medical leave. These expanded options are currently authorized through December 31, 2020. **NEW**

[Massachusetts Child Care](#)

EDUCATION RELATED

[DESE Commissioner's Weekly Update](#), September 14 **NEW**

Based on collaboration with the Department of Public Health and evolving medical and scientific findings related to COVID-19, [DESE is issuing an updated version of the protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios](#), July 17, 2020 (Updated September 14, 2020) September 17 **NEW**

[State Guidance Q&A on Special Education and Fall Reopening 2020](#), from [Massachusetts Advocates for Children](#) **UPDATED**

[COVID-19 Related DESE School Guidance pages](#), including [Special Education Services](#) **UPDATED**

[Early Intervention \(EI\) Services during COVID-19](#) **ENGLISH, ESPAÑOL**

[Moving Assessments Forward](#), May 20

[Sample Virtual IEP Agenda](#)

[Remote Learning Record](#)

[Remote Learning Plan](#)

[SEPAC Best Practices During Covid-19](#)

[WGBH - Distance Learning Center Tools](#): Well organized and not overwhelming!

[Family Resource Toolkit](#) from the Department of Education: multiple languages

CONFERENCE

November 14, [AANE's Fall Virtual Daniel W. Rosenn Connections Conference \(Asperger/Autism Network\)](#): A virtual conference for adults with Asperger/autism or similar neurodiverse profiles, parents and professionals. **NEW**

WEBINARS: UPCOMING

September 23, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., [Autism Insurance, COVID and Telehealth Updates](#), from the [Autism Insurance Resource Center](#). Please join the AIRC for an update on what's new with regard to autism insurance. An update will be provided on access to ABA via Telehealth, and access to behavioral health services. COVID updates will be included, as well as an overview of how to access services and supports through commercial (employer) plans and public (MassHealth) plans. Terri Farrell, Project Director from the AIRC will present. **Zoom Meeting Information**: Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://umassmed.zoom.us/j/99221396856?pwd=UENndTFXVnB3dEdYeWlkMjdWNEp5dz09>, Meeting ID: 992 2139 6856, Password: 008996. Email info@disabilityinfo.org or call 774-455-4056 for more information. **NEW**

September 23, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., [Anxiety and Return to School](#), from the [Lurie Center](#). In this conversation, Drs. Keary and McLeod will discuss methods to assess and support students with autism/anxiety challenges as they transition into an increasingly unpredictable school environment. **NEW**

September 24, 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., [MCPAP](#) for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Intellectual Disabilities is a recently established program which offers support to Emergency Services Program/Mobile Crisis Intervention (ESP/MCI) providers working with youth and young adults with ASD or ID who are having a behavioral health crisis. Join [Autism Insurance Resource Center](#) for a webinar to learn more about this program and how it helps families and providers. Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://umassmed.zoom.us/j/98707814083?pwd=TlVTSyt1cFdLVjNXM3A0aWplSkxqQT09>. Meeting ID: 987 0781 4083. Password: 900729. **NEW**

September 24 and October 1, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.; [Advocacy Boot Camp](#), from [Tri-Town SEPAC in Boxboro MA](#). The two sessions are The Curriculum Meets the IEP, and Effective Communication and time for Q & A. **NEW**

October 7, 6:00 p.m., [ALEC Training \(Autism Awareness Training\)](#). Join The [Special Needs Family Alliance](#), Mass Families Organizing for Change, Family Empowerment, Autism Connections and presenter Captain Bill Cannata,



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Statewide ALEC Coordinator, for an online ALEC training for parents and caregivers. Please email joanne.lucey@pathlightgroup.org if you would like to attend this event. Online registration will open soon. **SAVE THE DATES FOR UPCOMING FAMILY EMPOWERMENT ONLINE TRAININGS: TRANSITION TRAINING ON 10/13 and ANTI-BULLYING TRAINING ON 11/10.**

October 7, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m., [I Did it My Way! From Day Services to Individualized Supports](#), from *The Arc of Massachusetts*. Learn from a group of self-advocates and their families on how they transformed their traditional day services into individualized support. Presenters will provide the before and after, and how they decided upon the right supports and funding sources. **NEW**

[Mass General Hospital Aspire programs for Parents](#), various dates and times. There is a fee associated with these trainings and groups. MGH Aspire programs support children, teens and adults with high cognitive autism spectrum disorder or a related profile. **NEW**

On demand: [Introduction to Tele-AAC](#), by *Communicāre, LLC and Nerissa Hall*, speech-language pathologist and assistive technology practitioner specializing in AAC, AT and telepractice. This course introduces tele-AAC and distinguishes it from the broader field of telepractice. This is a self-guided course and has a fee of \$20.00. Participants should expect to read the text and watch the corresponding videos. ASHA CEUs are available. **NEW**

WEBINARS-PREVIOUS

[Making Sense of MassHealth and Private Healthcare Financing with Pat Nemias](#), September 8. This Family Empowerment webinar included: different types of private health insurances, different MassHealth options, MassHealth eligibility information, unique MassHealth application forms required to apply for a child with a disability and an overview of Premium Assistance. [PDF of Presentation](#). **NEW**

[How to Navigate the Fall School Reopening with Special Education Advocate Nancy Farnsworth](#), August 25. [PDF Presentation](#). **NEW**

[DESE updates and special education news](#), July 30. Director of Government Affairs Maura Sullivan for The Arc welcomed Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner

of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. [Filing for Guardianship during COVID-19](#), July 17 from The Arc and Attorney Karen Mariscal. [PDF Presentation](#).

[Family Empowerment recent Webinar archive with PowerPoint Presentations and Recordings](#). **NEW**

SUPPORT GROUPS/CONTACT A SPECIALIST

Special Needs Family Alliance: This is a group of parents and concerned caregivers in the Franklin County area who seek to support, educate, and provide resources to each other to improve the quality of our loved ones' lives and make our journey just a little bit easier! The group meets twice per month on the first Wednesday evening and the third Thursday morning. Email caroline.wenck@pathlightgroup.org for more information. **NEW**

Autism Connections Western MA Support Group: This support group is open to all family members of children and young adults with autism and meets virtually on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 5:30pm-7:30pm. Contact Linda at wynne92@aol.com for more information. **NEW**

Special Education Forum, Families Helping Families, every Wednesday evening from 8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Nancy Farnsworth, Education Advocate for Autism Connections, and Karen Serra, Director of Family Empowerment and Autism Connections will facilitate the online conversation. Please [register](#) if you would like to join the discussion. Read the [flyer](#) for more information. **NEW**

YOUNG ADULT ACTIVITIES

[Whole Children/Milestones Rec activities](#) **FALL SESSION**

[Springfield JCC September events](#) **NEW**

[AANE events for SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER](#) **NEW**

[The Bridge Center CSO, SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER events](#) **NEW**

RECREATION/FUN!

[Girls on the Run](#) **NEW**

[Whole Children/Milestones Rec activities](#) **FALL SESSION**

[MASS MoCA](#)



Autism Connections, Family Empowerment, Whole Children, Milestones, Whole Selves, Adult Family Care, Shared Living

Our team is using a variety of technology to stay connected to you - email is our first choice. If we return your phone call our calls may show as restricted in some cases, so please check your messages if you are expecting to hear from us.

TEAM DIRECTORY

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A Pathlight Program
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

How can we help you?

Contact any of us at the Pathlight programs and we will do our best to help you with your requests and needs. Email info@pathlightgroup.org, familyempowerment@pathlightgroup.org or autismconnections@pathlightgroup.org. If you don't have email, call the program managers listed on our team directory on page 7.

Please share this newsletter with families and other individuals you think may need help.

 Life can be tough,
but so are you,
and we can help.

This newsletter is for informational purposes only; it does not constitute legal, medical or other advice. All resources are subject to change as the situation evolves. Contact joanne.lucey@pathlightgroup.org with any questions.



A new take on Halloween Masks!
Whether you plan some COVID-safe Halloween activities, or just want to scare up some laughs on your Zoom calls for the day, here are some fun mask ideas!

