



Community Connection Newsletter

resources for the community

April 8, 2020



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WE ARE HERE

COVID-19 UPDATE

Pathlight continues to operate at 100 percent, as we are an essential business. As a human service organization that serves people with disabilities and autism, we provide necessary care and services 24/7.

Our commitment to that work is stronger than ever, and the work to ensure the health and safety of the individuals we serve has greatly intensified. Our teams are meeting seven days a week to ensure that we are fully prepared to meet any challenges that come our way. Here are some of the ways we are continuing to support the community:

We are providing essential services to individuals with disabilities who live in community homes, apartments and family homes.

We are supporting children, teens and adults with autism and their families.

We are caring for individuals living in our residential homes with staff 24/7.

We are creating online enrichment classes, support groups, workshops for families and activities for our recreation and day programs.

We are responding to emergency needs of families.

We are direct caregivers, nurses, counselors, home care providers, teachers, advocates, clinicians, trainers, specialists, support professionals and caseworkers.

Let us know if we can help you!

Find more information about Pathlight's COVID-19 Preparations on our [website](#).

Whole Children/ Milestones Recreation enrichment classes

All in-person classes remain cancelled until at least early May when we will review the situation. Class fees already paid can be credited for future use, or refunded.

The entire team has been working hard to develop online activities and classes and that schedule will be released any day.

Dates for the summer session are July 6 to August 21 and may take place if restrictions are lifted. We remain optimistic! Stay tuned for all of our online offerings, which will be posted to the Whole Children calendar on the website.

Milestones Day Program

Milestones is not offering in person services until further notice, but virtual check-ins, online classes and groups are happening every day.

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT AND AUTISM CONNECTIONS

Family Empowerment Workshops and Groups

Workshops will continue as virtual events whenever possible. Please check the Family Empowerment [Facebook page](#) for information.

Our [Coffee and Conversation series](#) continues every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings, and Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Call Donna Kushi at 413-585-8010, x105 for more information. [Download the flyer](#) for meeting times and access codes.

Autism Connections

Events and activities will continue virtually as possible from both the Easthampton and Pittsfield centers. We are currently running some private online groups for individuals who were already connected to specific programs.

IMPORTANT UPDATES

CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. [Link](#)

How to make your own face covering. [Link](#)

Action needed to keep remote services for students with disabilities. (202) 408-9514, National Disability Rights Network [Link](#)

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

[Mass.gov](#): general state information relative to COVID-19, updated daily.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#): updated daily.

[The Massachusetts Department of Public Health \(DPH\)](#) has information for the public and providers.

[Information and resources](#) to help DDS families and individuals.

[Information about Covid-19 in plain language for individuals with disabilities.](#)

[The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#)
This site has recently issued guidance and waivers

from existing rules to assist providers to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak.

[The World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) provides rolling updates from around the globe.

[The National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) links to National Institute of Infectious Diseases Resources.

[The American Hospital Association \(AHA\)](#) provides a single source repository for many materials relating to COVID-19.

[Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association: MHA](#) and its membership are in regular contact with the Massachusetts DPH and national health organizations.

[Essential services during Stay at Home Order](#): check this information to see which organizations in Massachusetts are allowed to continue services.

[Information about Covid-19 in plain language for individuals with disabilities.](#)

[Call 211](#): (always a confidential call) is a resource for finding government benefits and services, non-profit organizations, support groups, volunteer opportunities, donation programs, and other local resources.

State, Special Education Related

[Mass Advocates for Children](#): “State mandates local provision of remote special educational services during COVID-19 emergency”.

[Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(DESE\)](#) provides updated information for schools.

Federal, Special Education Related

[Questions And Answers On Providing Services To Children With Disabilities During The Coronavirus Disease Outbreak- Issued March 2020](#)

[Supplemental Fact Sheet — Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities, March 21, 2020](#)

Small Businesses

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), enacted on March 27, 2020, is



designed to encourage Eligible Employers to keep employees on their payroll, despite experiencing economic hardship related to COVID-19, with an employee retention tax credit (Employee Retention Credit). <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/faqs-employee-retention-credit-under-the-cares-act>

More Business relief programs

COVID-19 Economic Impact Payments

Latest news from April 1: “The U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service today announced that Social Security beneficiaries who are not typically required to file tax returns will not need to file an abbreviated tax return to receive an Economic Impact Payment. Instead, payments will be automatically deposited into their bank accounts.”

General Social Security information, SSI, IRS info

Job Loss/Unemployment

Full unemployment information can be found [here](#) or call (617) 626-6338 to request weekly benefits, daily from 6 a.m.–10 p.m.

The quickest way to file a successful unemployment claim is through the UI online portal which can be viewed [here](#).

Attend a [Virtual town hall](#) to learn about how to file for benefits.

General Information resources

National Autism Association, 877.622.2884

[Tips For Working With Support Staff During COVID-19, written by individuals with disabilities.](#)

HEALTH SERVICES

Masshealth Information (call MassHealth at (800) 841-2900)

PCA services: For those receiving PCA services and who cannot currently fill the hours, they can receive Home Health Aides to cover the amount of PCA hours they receive. If PCA hours are being used in part, Home Health Aides will fill the remaining hours. This

will last during the entirety that MA is under a state of emergency. Click this [link](#) for all the details including how to access this service.

MassHealth PCA Consumers who have unfulfilled PCA hours and who 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. View more information [HERE](#).

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

MassHealth Telehealth Services for Behavioral Health

Governor Baker’s Expansion of Telehealth Services Order

MassHealth Telehealth Services for Behavioral Health

General Health Related Information

Save Receipts for over the counter medicines if you use a Health Savings Account

Buoy Health Care Tool: The new online resource for residents to check their symptoms and connect with the next appropriate health care resource.

Mental Health Resources

Maintaining Emotional Health & Well-Being During the COVID-19 Outbreak: Click [HERE](#) for a list of resources and tips from Mass.gov for staying emotionally healthy and well.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) Navigating a Crisis: Emergency Services Program (Crisis Teams) services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You can find the ESP serving your area, by calling 1-877-382-1609 and entering your zip code. You can also check out this [list of ESPs](#) by location. [More information from NAMI.](#)



Samaritans is continuing operations 24/7, as always. During this unprecedented time, it can feel overwhelming to receive constant messages about COVID-19. Call or text their 24/7 helpline any time at 877-870-4673.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (US Department of Health & Human Services).

REMOTE LEARNING TOOLS

WGBH - Distance Learning Center Tools: Well organized and not overwhelming!

Maintaining Transition Skills at Home

HEALTH DISABILITY RIGHTS

Civil Rights, HIPAA, and the Coronavirus Disease

In light of the Public Health Emergency concerning the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is providing this bulletin to ensure that entities covered by civil rights authorities keep in mind their obligations under laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, and exercise of conscience and religion in HHS-funded programs.

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.

FOOD PANTRIES & OTHER RELATED SUPPORT

Find a food bank or food distribution site near you HERE, or contacting the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts at 413-247-9738.

Northampton Survival Center Update

<https://www.servings.org/>

Food stamps online application (SNAP) 877) 382-2363

Extra SNAP Benefits: The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is issuing emergency SNAP (food stamp) supplements to many SNAP households to help buy food during the pandemic crisis. Congress approved special SNAP supplement benefits in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 877-382-2363.

Western Mass Community Mutual Aid Website

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

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

Western Mass listing of school lunch programs

Springfield Schools expanding meal plan to include dinner UPDATE April 6

SHOPPING: SPECIAL ELDER HOURS

Stop & Shop - 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. daily

Geissler's in Agawam: 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

Big Y: 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

NOTE: Big Y to close Sunday and Monday to give employees two-day break

Whole Foods: one hour before standard opening hours

Trader Joe's: expedited special senior line to enter the store from 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Walgreen's: 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.: Tuesdays

Walmart: 6:00* a.m. - 7:00 a.m.: Tuesdays *or one hour before standard store opening

Costco: 8:00 a.m - 9:00 a.m.: Tuesdays/Thursdays

Target: Reserved shopping the first hour on Wednesdays

DELIVERY SERVICES/PICK UP

General information

Massachusetts Food Delivery: Farm fresh food delivered to your door, order by Saturday midnight for delivery the following week; \$30 Min Purchase, \$10 Delivery Fee; SNAP customers can get free shipping with coupon SNAP.



Buy Local Food/Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture: Farms (home delivery and pick-up), local grocery stores, senior specific options, restaurants, bakeries and specialty producers - all in western Massachusetts. 413.665.7100

Simos Produce: Pre-packed grocery box items, 2 box minimum delivery.

Instacart: groceries, especially in the Berkshires.

Stop & Shop/Uber discount ride offer for 60+

Berkshires List of Restaurant Delivery/Pick up

List of Northampton restaurants with delivery/pick up

SCHOOL DISTRICT INFORMATION

Northampton Community Resources/Emergency

SUPPORT FOR THE HOMELESS

From the Mass Coalition for the Homeless: Families with children seeking to apply for Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter only can apply by phone with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Please share this number with families seeking shelter: 1-866-584-0653. More details about the EA program can be found here: Get Help: Families with Children

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

RAFT-Residential Assistance for Families in Transition

TRANSPORTATION

PVTA: Service Update 4-6-20: PVTA is providing transportation for ESSENTIAL TRIPS ONLY. Call 413-781-7882 for more information.

CHILDCARE

https://eecedlead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure

Click this link for information on how the emergency childcare program will work. Priority will be given to essential workers.

ADVOCACY/STUDIES

The Arc: Advocacy related to pandemic legislation
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities

Federation for Children with Special Needs: FSCN's website has a wide range of helpful information.

UCONN STUDY: Understanding Stress and Personal Well-Being Among Primary Caregivers of Children Aged 6 to 18 During COVID-19 Pandemic

ONLINE GROUPS/WEBINARS

MFOFC Housing Seminar April 8, 1:00pm

Federation for Children with Special Needs facebook page for their weekday Livestream events for information and support. More information: (617) 236-7210.

Special Needs Advocacy Network: recorded webinar on remote learning and supporting families in a PowerPoint format.

Western MA Recovering Learning Community: Support groups are listed here. Call (866) 641-2853 for more information.

AANE (Asperger/autism network): Check out upcoming online events here. Call 617-393-3824 x32 for more information. There is a wide variety of wonderful online groups for parents and young adults.

ABLE Savings Accounts Webinar 4/14. Tuesday, April 14th, 2020, 7-9 p.m., with Mary Rubenis, the Attainable Outreach Manager for the Massachusetts ABLE Savings Plan. Log in: <https://umassmed.zoom.us/j/134606035> or call 1-646-876-9923, meeting ID: 134606035. Call Amy Weinstock for more information 774-455-4056 or email her at Amy.Weinstock@umassmed.edu.

Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress: Supporting your student during COVID-19, April 18.

The Arc Webinar Series: The Arc team hosts weekly, half-hour webinars and Q&A sessions for updates on federal and local policies.

Supporting Children on the Autism Spectrum in Schools from FCSN, April 21, 12:30.



[Visions of Community Conference workshops to review](#) (past event)

[Social and Emotional Learning Alliance for Massachusetts](#)

[Massachusetts Advocates for Children](#) As part of our COSA response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Massachusetts Advocates for Children is leading weekly virtual chats for parents to connect with each other and learn tips for advocating for your children during this pandemic while they are home from school.

[SpedChildMass](#): wide variety of online activities, groups and webinars.

VETERAN SERVICES

[Mass Vets Advisor](#): Qualifying Veterans and their dependents receive necessary financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, fuel, and medical care in accordance with a formula which takes into account the number of dependents and income from all sources.

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](#) is “completing intakes over the phone. We encourage everyone to call and complete their appointment over the phone. Please consider the safety of our staff before coming into the office, please call 413-552-1548 (press 1 for English, 2 for Spanish and then 4 to speak with a live person). The office is open from 8:30-4:30 M-F”.

INTERNET/PHONE DISCOUNTS

[MassHealth Directory of Internet and Phone discount programs.](#)

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

[Neighbor to Neighbor](#): one-time assistance for local residents who are in economic distress.

HOW TO MANAGE TIME AT HOME

[A Spectrum of Ideas for Autism at Home](#)

Supporting Individuals with Autism through Uncertain Times, from the UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Team, [full package of information](#) including social stories, schedules and all downloadable support sheets

[AT HOME RESOURCES FOR CARE & CALM](#)

RESOURCES IN OTHER LANGUAGES

[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.

[FAMILIAS: Buscando Ayuda para Nuestros Niños con Planes de Educación Individualizados/Necesidades de Apoyo](#)

[Información de COVID-19 Por y Para Personas con Discapacidades](#)

FUN THINGS!

As cabin fever sets in, try these [all-ages ideas for fun](#), self-improvement, and even a little stress relief from the Boston Globe.



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.

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WHOLE
CHILDREN


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 direct you to resources and help you with your request 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 page.

Please share this newsletter with families and other individuals you think may need help. We are also mailing it by post to those who do not have online access.

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

Can you help us?

Donated Items Needed

We asked staff in our residential homes what kind of things they'd like to have to help residents with fun activities. They told us they would love to have **arts and craft supplies**, **iPads** (to help residents remotely visit with their families), **bean bag chairs** for movie nights, **coloring books** and **karaoke machines**.

If you may be able to donate any of these items, please email info@Pathlightgroup.org. Thank you!

Two Question Survey

As we continue to develop our online activities, your input is important to us.

1. What online classes or events would be helpful for you and your kids?
2. Given your kids' school and other obligations, when is the best time to hold these online classes?

Please email Julie.Hooks@pathlightgroup.org if you have a moment to provide some input for us.