



Community Connection Newsletter

resources for the community

July 16, 2020



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THE PATHLIGHT COMMUNITY

See Whole Children's theater program documentary "This is Me"! **NEW**

Whole Children's theater program documentary "This is Me" will premiere August 5th, at 7p.m. on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitch! It will also premiere on Northampton Open Media channels. More details coming soon, but in the meantime, [sign up to attend the premiere!](#)

The first summer session of Whole Children and Milestones Rec classes is in process and runs from July 6 to August 8. Summer Session 2 is from August 17-September 19. The schedule for that session will be released by late July, and be similar to Session 1.

Learn more about Summer Session classes and find instructions on how to enroll on the [Whole Children website](#).

IMPORTANT UPDATES

[Baker-Polito Administration Announces COVID-19 Funding for Special Education Programs](#), July 13 **NEW**

[Reusable Bags Allowed Again In Massachusetts Grocery Stores](#), July 13 **NEW**

[Gov. Charlie Baker launches new online portal for residents to report businesses not complying with coronavirus safety guidelines](#), July 13 **NEW**

[DESE Commissioner's Weekly Update](#), July 13 **NEW**

[Massachusetts Day Program Guidance, July 2: Minimum Requirements for Health and Safety](#) **NEW**

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

#DontCutUsOut: Act Now To Ensure Funding For Services For Adults With I/DD During Re-Opening.

Adults with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, or other intellectual and developmental disabilities served by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) will lose services if funding and policies don't meet requirements of the re-opening period and thereafter. The campaign #DontCutUsOut is to ensure that our safety net continues. YOU CAN HELP! (from the Arc). The process of informing your legislator of your concerns takes just a minute with the Arc's forms. **Priority**

[Resources for families and Individuals from DDS](#) **NEW**

[MFOFC](#) is very excited to announce the launch of [Remote Education Log](#), a web-based app to help families keep track of their children's remote special education services and instruction while school is closed. Built in partnership with [Massachusetts Advocates for Children](#) and the Northeast region of [Mass Families Organizing for Change](#), Remote Education Log uses TallyLab's privacy-first data collaboration platform to ensure children's data is kept safe and secure. **NEW**

[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 ONGOING RESOURCES

[Western Massachusetts COVID-19 Case Numbers](#)

UPDATE

[Mass.gov: state COVID-19 info](#) **UPDATE**

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) **UPDATE**

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

[The Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#)

[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

[General business guidance from Mass.gov](#) **UPDATE**

Job Loss/Unemployment

[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](#).

[Attend a Virtual town hall](#) this week to learn about how to file for benefits, including Spanish language options.

[Google announces 100,000 need-based scholarships](#) for online certificates in data analytics, project management and UX. The certificates are created and taught by Google employees, do not require a college degree, can be completed in three to six months and are offered through the online learning platform Coursera. **NEW**

July 28-30: Moving Western MA Forward, an Online Job Expo. For more information: [FLYER](#) or [EVENT](#) **NEW**

[Pathlight Job Opportunities](#) **NEW**

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.

[Step-by-Step Guide to Using TeleMedicine](#)

[MassHealth Telehealth Services for Behavioral Health](#)

General Health Related Information

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

[Mass General Hospital Mental Health Resources related to COVID19](#)

[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: 1-800-273-8255

HELP WITH MEDICAL BILLS

[Getting Out Of Medical Debt Can Feel Impossible. Here's How To Do It](#), from NPR. Article about seven things you can do to get medical bills reduced – or even forgiven. **NEW**

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 **NEW**:

- [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](#) **UPDATE**

[Getting Tested Social Story](#)

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

[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

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

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. **UPDATE**

[Plain Language Coronavirus Glossary](#)

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

SOCIAL STORIES

[Outdoor visitation policy](#)

A wide variety of [Social Stories](#) from *Autism Little Learners*

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

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

[Western Mass listing of school lunch programs](#): note that

[there may be updates to this information.](#) **UPDATE**

RESOURCES IN OTHER LANGUAGES

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

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/index-sp.html>

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](#)

[Servicios de intervención temprana durante COVID-19](#)

[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](#)

[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](#) **NEW**

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.



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

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.

DELIVERY SERVICES

[A comparison of the top grocery delivery services](#), from *The Penny Hoarder*

SUPPORT FOR THE HOMELESS

[Attorney General Advisory on Residential Evictions](#)

[Local Emergency Shelters in Western MA during COVID-19](#), including options for isolation.

[Community Action](#): Call the Community Resources and Advocacy program at 413-475-1570 or 413-582-4237.

RAFT- [Residential Assistance for Families in Transition](#)

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.](#)

THE CENSUS

["When I respond to the census, I count!" YOU COUNT TOO!](#) Video from the Center for New Americans **AMAZING**

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

[Complete the Census online](#)

GENERAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES

[Franklin and Hampshire County Resources from Community Action](#) **UPDATE**

[Franklin County/North Quabbin COVID-19 Wi-Fi and Personal Care Resources](#). Includes HotSpot and charging locations, public bathrooms, public hand washing stations, Food/shelter/shower locations, Narcon info, Helplines. **UPDATE**

[Strategies to support teens/young adults with autism during COVID-19](#), from Harvard Health Publishing

[Mass Advocates for Children](#) **UPDATE**

[Greater MA Special Needs Events](#) **UPDATE**

[COVID-19 Resources for families](#): includes excellent information that may not be included elsewhere.

[Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#): excellent toolkit with specific need relations resources

LEGAL RESOURCES

[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. **UPDATE**

PVTA: [Service Update](#). Call 413-781-7882 for more information. **UPDATE**

CHILDCARE

[Massachusetts Child Care](#) **UPDATE**

[Mass Options](#): MassOptions connects elders, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers with agencies and organizations that can best meet their needs.

EDUCATION RELATED

MFOFC is very excited to announce the launch of [Remote Education Log](#), a web-based app to help families keep track of their children's remote special education services and instruction while school is closed. Built in partnership with [Massachusetts Advocates for Children](#) and the Northeast region of [Mass Families Organizing for Change](#),



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

Remote Education Log uses TallyLab's privacy-first data collaboration platform to ensure children's data is kept safe and secure. **NEW**

DESE Commissioner's Weekly Update, July 13 **NEW**

COVID-19 Related DESE School Guidance pages, including Special Education Services **UPDATE**

How to "Distance Teach" Tutorials (for educators but helpful resources for parents also) **NEW**

Early Intervention (EI) Services during COVID-19 **ENGLISH, ESPAÑOL**

Moving Assessments Forward, May 20

PBS Learning Media

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

MatchUs, part of MFOFC, is working with families and educators ANYWHERE to support 1:1 conversations on how best to support students at home.

SURVEYS

NAMI Massachusetts & MA Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP) is developing a training for emergency department staff to help improve the ways they respond to people in mental health and/or substance use crises and has created a survey to inform that training. The survey deals with the treatment of people experiencing mental health and substance use crises, as well as those who sought medical treatment and felt the focus was on their prior mental health or substance use history rather than their medical condition. Feedback from the autism community about experiences visiting Massachusetts Emergency Departments in the past four years is needed! Complete the survey [HERE](#) to share your experience. **NEW**

The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) is working diligently to continue to provide a vital service to the area by

meeting the growing transportation needs of Franklin County as they plan for the future and update their Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan. For this 5-year plan update, they are seeking input from the public on current services and how they meet your needs. The survey is mobile-friendly, anonymous and is available in both English and Spanish. Access the survey [HERE](#). **NEW**

CONFERENCES/OTHER

July 22, 1:00 p.m., 30th Anniversary of the ADA 2020 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Boston Center for Independent Living and the City of Boston Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities are hosting a virtual ADA rally to proclaim disability rights with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion! Among guest speakers are longtime disability rights activists Judy Heumann, Courtland Townes III and Sandy Ho. Pre-recorded messages on the ADA include those from Governor Baker, Congresswoman Pressley, Mayor Walsh, and Attorney General Healey. Register [here](#). **NEW**

July 23, 1:00 p.m., Ability Job Fair. a live, online career fair. Companies can connect live with job seekers with disabilities from all over the country, and job seekers have the opportunity to leave a 3 minute Video Message for a wide selection of organizations. **NEW**

July 28-30: Moving Western MA Forward, an Online Job Expo. For more information: [FLYER](#) or [EVENT](#)

WEBINARS: UPCOMING

July 22 - September 9, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., Online College 101 Information Series for Transition Age Youth (18-22). This is a unique opportunity for your son or daughter to meet other young adults and an outstanding mentor. Space is limited, so grab a spot soon! Please note that although there is a fee for this series of webinars, financial assistance may be available if needed.

WEBINARS-PREVIOUS: RECORDINGS/PRESENTATIONS

Advocacy, Social Capital and Building Community, June 26, from MFOFC, Family Empowerment and Autism Connections, [Al Condoluci](#). [Recording](#), [PowerPoint](#) **NEW**

Early Intervention and Turning Three During COVID-19,



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

June 16, Family Empowerment, Autism Connections, Pathlight's Nancy Farnsworth, and Deirdre Morrissey - Program Director at Criterion-Heritage Early Intervention. [Recording](#) (Password: 3j?e=6^W&), [PowerPoint](#)

[The Intersection of Race and Disability](#), June 15, from the Arc of Massachusetts.

[Supporting Students with a History of Trauma & Anxiety During COVID-19](#), June 9, from Neuropsychology & Education Services for Children and Adults, featuring Pediatric Neuropsychologists Stephanie Monaghan-Blout and Renee Marchant.

[Turning 18, What you need to know in a nutshell](#), from Family Empowerment with Frederick Misilo Esq., Fletcher Tilton PC, June 9. [English Powerpoint](#), [Spanish Powerpoint](#), [English Recording](#), use password 2z?n8dS7.

[Charting the LifeCourse for Transition](#), Laurel Peltier, May 12, Family Empowerment

[Becoming Person Centered with Cheryl Ryan Chan](#), May 6, Family Empowerment

[Special Education and Remote Learning](#), May 5, Education Advocate Nancy Farnsworth

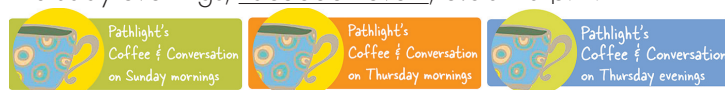
SUPPORT GROUPS/CONTACT A SPECIALIST

▶ **Pathlight Coffee and Conversation:** Meet virtually with a specialist to discuss the topics of your choice, including transitioning out of high school during Covid-19, virtual IEP meetings, remote learning, behavioral challenges, managing isolation or the topic of your choice. Hours available:

Sunday mornings, [Facebook event](#), 9:30-11:00 a.m.;

Thursday mornings, [Facebook event](#), 9:30-11:00 a.m.;

Thursday evenings, [Facebook event](#), 8:30-10 p.m.



Parent and Caregiver Support Group, hosted by BHN, is a welcoming group for parents and caregivers of those with autism (and who is a client of DDS) to share experiences and receive support. For more information contact Stephen Fanolis at (413) 302-0450 or stephen.fanolis@bhninc.org.

NEW

[Autism Support Group](#), hosted by A Spectrum of Difference (Athol). This Group is held via Zoom on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each Month.

YOUNG ADULT ACTIVITIES

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

[AANE events for JULY](#) **NEW**

The Bridge Center CSO, [July](#) & [August](#) calendars. **NEW**

[Live athlete chat with MA Special Olympics](#). Due to the popularity of the Friday athlete chats, Tuesday is also being offered! These are both fun social times to talk with friends, or make new ones! Anyone is welcome. **NEW**

[Cafe Creations](#): Café Creations, from the Mental Health Association (MHA) in Springfield, will provide opportunities for creativity, friendship and increasing independence for 15 adults ages 18-22 with Autism or developmental disabilities. The Cafe will take place on July 22. Download flyer [here](#).

RECREATION/FUN!

July 26, 6-9 p.m. [Louvre: A Virtual Tour](#) (Facebook Live) [Summer camp info-local](#) (virtual and traditional) **NEW**

August 22, [Buddy's Sunshine Angels Golf Tournament For Autism](#). This tournament is a third party event which will benefit Autism Connections in the Berkshires and will practice social distancing and all safety measures. There are spots for teams, and sponsors. Safety protocols will be followed. **NEW**

The 413 Mom **NEW**

[CITYSpace Virtual Summer Camp](#) **NEW**

[Drive-ins around New England](#) (from WBUR) How does sound work at pop up drive-ins? [Here is some info](#). **NEW**

[Tanglewood for kids!](#) **NEW**

INTERESTING TO READ

[Conspiracy Theories Aside, Here's What Contact Tracers Really Do](#), from NPR. **NEW**

[COVID-19: Safe Re-entry of People with Down Syndrome into their Communities](#), from Mass General Hospital. **NEW**



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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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.**

Please note that all resource information is subject to change as the situation and supports or activities evolve. If you have questions, want to help, or need help, email us at the above addresses and we will be glad to assist and guide you.

How to Help Your Child Adapt to Wearing a Mask

7 Quick Tips for Parents 

<h3 style="margin: 0;">Explain WHY</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">Use easy-to-understand language and positive phrasing. For example, 'Many people are sick right now. Wearing a mask will protect you from germs.'</p>	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Take a Picture</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">Ask family members or friends to take pictures of themselves wearing masks. You can even arrange a virtual get together so everyone can show off their masks.</p> 
<h3 style="margin: 0;">Practice Makes Perfect</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">Shape the behavior by breaking it down into smaller steps. Then practice & reinforce each step.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holding the mask. 2. Putting it against his or her face. 3. Securing the elastic. 	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Let's Pretend</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">Integrate masks into your favorite pretend play schemes. Encourage your child to dress up as a doctor, nurse, or veterinarian.</p> 
<h3 style="margin: 0;">Stuffed Animals & Dolls Need Masks Too</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">Put a mask on your child's favorite stuffed animal or doll as a reminder that we are all in this together!</p> 	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Start with Familiar Clothing</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">Choose clothing that your child already wears and turn it into a mask. Some ideas include: a scarf, balaclava or bandana.</p> 

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