



Community Connection Newsletter

resources for the community

June 17, 2020



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THE PATHLIGHT COMMUNITY

Whole Children and Milestones Recreation **NEW**

As summer fast approaches, we are brainstorming how to best serve our students. We have made the decision not to run our usual in-person day programs for 3-17 year olds or afternoon classes for adults this summer. But we have other ideas!

The free online classes that we have been offering this spring, which wrap up on June 27, have been a great help to families.

We are considering offering similar classes, through Zoom and Discord, in two 5-week sessions, July 6 - August 8 and August 10 - September 12. Unfortunately it is not sustainable to continue offering the classes for free, so we are considering charging a flat "membership" fee of \$100 for each of the two sessions. Once a member, a student can come to as many classes as they want, as well as any additional online events we sponsor, like cooking shows, read-aloud time, and social stories.

In addition, our theater director Matt Meers will be teaching an online theater class on July 9, 16, 23, and 30 with the possibility of July 30 being an in-person event. This class would be offered separately from the membership plan, and cost \$40.

We hope to try out one or two additional in-person events/classes in July, and possibly more in August and September. Before finalizing our plans, we wanted to hear your thoughts. Please take five minutes to complete this [survey](#) to help our decision making process. For more information email [Julie Hooks](#). Thank you! **NEW**

IMPORTANT UPDATES

[Families of adults with special needs face unique challenges during pandemic](#), *The Today Show*, June 18. Leo Sarkissian, from the Arc of Massachusetts, created a [written summary](#) of the episode. **NEW**

[UMass Amherst to modify fall semester](#), June 18 **NEW**

[Newly Designed Social Security Retirement Benefits Portal](#), June 18 **NEW**

[DESE Commissioner's Weekly Update](#), June 15 **NEW**

[The Arc of Massachusetts: the week's updates](#), June 15 **NEW**

[Springfield Public Schools announce plans for next academic year](#), June 10 **NEW**

[Early Intervention \(EI\) Services during COVID-19, ENGLISH, ESPAÑOL](#), June 9 **NEW**

[Interactive Map of testing sites](#)

[Phase II Reopening Order](#), June 6, **MA is currently in Phase II**

[Regulating Gatherings Throughout the Commonwealth Order](#), June 6

[Visitation policies for DDS run residential programs](#), June 6

[Phase II of Reopening -Massachusetts Set to Begin on June 8 Press Release](#), June 6

[COVID Publications and Resources from The Institute for Community Inclusion](#)

IMPORTANT ONGOING RESOURCES

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

[Mass.gov: state COVID-19 info](#), updated daily

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

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[The Massachusetts Department of Public Health \(DPH\) Information and resources to help DDS families.](#)

[The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services CMS](#)

[Essential services during Stay at Home Order](#)

[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 x 3224, ESPAÑOL: 617-357-8431 x 3237

Small Businesses

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

Economic Impact Payments

[Social Security Economic Impact Payments to Rep Payees](#)
June 1

Job Loss/Unemployment

[COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits](#) - from MassLegalHelp, update May 29.

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.

[Pathlight Job Opportunities](#)

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

HEALTH DISABILITY RIGHTS

[Suggested Visitation Policy Statement](#) from the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry

Disability Law Center's recent [letter](#) to the MA Commissioner of Public Health regarding reasonable accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

[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

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

[Guidance on Interpreting COVID-19 Tests](#)

[CDC Testing Information](#)

[Getting Tested Social Story](#)

[Testing Site Locator](#)

[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.

[COVID-19 Disability Form](#) to have ready for the hospital to show that an individual needs 1-1 assistance.

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**

[Plain Language Coronavirus Glossary](#)

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

SOCIAL STORIES

[Outdoor visitation policy](#) **NEW**

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. **UPDATED**

RESOURCES IN OTHER LANGUAGES

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

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

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

[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

Did you get a P-EBT card in the mail for your DTA funds? Click [HERE](#) for instructions on how to use it.

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.



DELIVERY SERVICES/PICK UP

A comparison of the top grocery delivery services, from The Penny Hoarder **NEW**

Amherst Food Delivery

Massachusetts Food Delivery: Farm fresh food delivered to your door, SNAP discounts

Buy Local Food/Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture - all in western Massachusetts. 413.665.7100

Instacart

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 **NEW**

What is the Census? A plain language document.

Complete the Census online

GENERAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES

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. June 16 **NEW**

Wheelchair and Assistive Technology Users: Precautions for COVID-19 **NEW**

Strategies to support teens/young adults with autism during COVID-19, from Harvard Health Publishing

Mass Advocates for Children

Greater MA Special Needs Events

COVID-19 Resources for families: includes excellent information that may not be included elsewhere.

Family toolkit from the Department of Education

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.

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

CHILDCARE

Massachusetts Child Care, June 1

Mass Options: MassOptions connects elders, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers with agencies and organizations that can best meet their needs, including connections to respite help.



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

EDUCATION RELATED

[COVID-19 School Closure Q&A: IEP Team Meetings](#), from Mass Advocates for Children. **NEW**

[DESE Commissioner's Weekly Update](#), June 15 **NEW**

[Zoom Meeting Presentation for Special Education Directors](#), June 12 **NEW**

[IEP Team Meetings Springfield Public Schools announce plans for next academic year](#), June 10

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

[Supplemental Guidance on Summer 2020 Special Education Services](#), June 8

[Autism Home School](#), Online Courses for High School. Registration June 14, class starts June 22

[Moving Assessments Forward](#), May 20

[Massachusetts Preschool Remote Learning Guidance & Prerequisite Content Standards](#), May 15

[PBS Learning Media](#)

[Sample Virtual IEP Agenda](#)

[Remote Learning Record](#)

[Remote Learning Plan](#)

[Subscribe to the DESE Commissioner updates](#)

[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.

ADVOCACY / STUDIES

Email [Congress](#) to Include the Disability Community in COVID-19 Relief Bills - it takes just 5 minutes. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed legislation that includes many of our top asks – and now the Senate must act! **ONGOING & IMPORTANT**

[The Arc: legislative priorities related to COVID-19](#)

[Disability Law Center's recent letter to the MA Commissioner of Public Health regarding reasonable accommodations for Persons with Disabilities](#)

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

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

[Boston University's The Road Ahead Study](#), focuses on autistic high school students graduating with a regular HS diploma.

WEBINARS: UPCOMING

June 19, 10:00 a.m., [Webinar: Tips to Help Children With Autism Thrive](#), from McLean Hospital. Join Laura D. Mead, MSEd, on Friday, June 19, at 10am EST, as she provides insights to support children with autism through the current pandemic and other unexpectedly difficult times. **NEW**

June 24, 2:00 p.m., [COVID's Impact on Person-Centered Arrangements: Parent Panel Discussion; How have person-centered living arrangements fared during the COVID-19 crisis?](#) from MFOFC and partners. **NEW**

June 26, 1:00 p.m., [Social Capital and Building Community, with Dr. Al Condeluci](#), with MFOFC, Family Empowerment and Autism Connections. [MORE INFORMATION/FB EVENT, FLYER, REGISTER](#) **NEW**

WEBINARS-PREVIOUS: RECORDINGS / PRESENTATIONS

[Early Intervention and Turning Three During COVID-19](#), June 16, Family Empowerment, Autism Connections, Pathlight Education Advocate Nancy Farnsworth and Deirdre Morrissey - Program Director at Criterion-Heritage Early Intervention. [Recording](#) (Password: 3j?=6^W&), [PowerPoint](#) **NEW**

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

[Supporting Students with a History of Trauma & Anxiety During COVID-19](#), June 9, from Neuropsychology &



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

Education Services for Children and Adults, featuring Pediatric Neuropsychologists Stephanie Monaghan-Blout and Renee Marchant. **NEW**

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

WEBINARS/EVENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Human Service Forum (June 19 and June 23)

SUPPORT GROUPS/CONTACT A SPECIALIST

▶ **Pathlight Open Office Hours: 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, and managing isolation. Hours available: Sunday mornings Facebook event, Register, 9:30-11:00 a.m.; Thursday mornings Facebook event, Register, 9:30-11:00 a.m.; Thursday evenings Facebook event, Register, 8:30-10p.m.**

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.

Parent Life Coaching available from Jewish Family & Children's Service. Set up a free phone call or video meeting for advice on creating a schedule for your loved one or troubleshoot challenging behaviors during school and day program closures.

CONFERENCE

Abilities Virtual Experience, June 19-21, 2020. Includes virtual workshops and events. **NEW**

International Fragile X Conference. The fully virtual

conference takes place over four days across three months: May 29-30, June 27, and July 22.

Massachusetts Down Syndrome Virtual Conference: Recorded presentations available starting in mid-June.

YOUNG ADULT ACTIVITIES

AANE events for June **UPDATED**

Youthworks, MassHire Franklin/Hampshire

Whole Children/Milestones Rec activities **NEW CLASSES**

RECREATION

Create a social circle during COVID-19 - Follow these five simple steps to create a safe social circle of up to 10 friends and family who can interact without physical distancing **NEW**

Summer camp info-local (virtual and traditional) **NEW**

Disney World Is Going to Be Different When It Reopens – Here Are the Major Changes, from *Travel + Leisure*.

FUN THINGS!

10 Disney Zumba Videos To Work Up A Magical Sweat **NEW**

Springfield JCC virtual activities **NEW**

Use Scholastic Books fun and free resources to create an epic summer of reading **NEW**

PARENT/CAREGIVER SELF-CARE

How to get sleep in uneasy times, NPR **NEW**

June 30, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m., Let's Get Away, Together! (A six-part armchair travel series for caregivers (and up to one guest)).

INTERESTING READS

Issue #3: Solitude, from swissnex of Boston. "Simply put, humans are social creatures and have adapted to be particularly suited for living in highly interdependent cultures."

Living an interdependent lifestyle is particularly helpful to people with disabilities, and particularly disruptive when it is interrupted by necessary pandemic safety guidelines. **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.

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A Pathlight Program
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

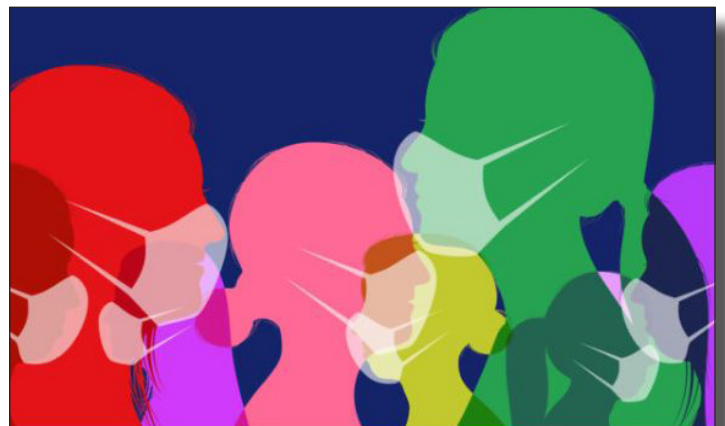
How can we help you?

Contact any of us at the Pathlight programs and we will do our best to 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 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.



Sensory- friendly tips for people who don't like to wear masks (or take a COVID test if one is necessary)

This article from the [Harvard Health Blog](#) addresses the problem of wearing a mask for many people who have sensory issues, and it offers some steps that may help. And [National Geographic](#) shows you how to keep your favorite masks clean!

Having a COVID test is also not the most pleasant experience for anyone, and the article includes links to social stories and a [video](#) from the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) about preparing for a test.