



Community Connection Newsletter

resources for the community

Volume I, Issue 17



A Pathlight Program
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Email editor Joanne.Lucey@
pathlightgroup.org with questions
or comments about the newsletter.

THE PATHLIGHT COMMUNITY

Whole Children/Milestones Rec Fall Session 2!

Registration is open for the Whole Children and Milestone Recreation Fall Session 2 classes (November 9 - December 12). Learn more about class offerings and sign up as a returning member [here](#). If you are new to Whole Children/Milestones Recreation, please contact Jane.Pronovost@pathlightgroup.org to register. **NEW SESSION**

Family Empowerment and Autism Connections

The 2020 Autism Waiver Program Open Interest Period will be held from October 16 – 31, 2020. The deadline is very strict and applications will not be accepted before October 16 or after October 31. Complete information and applications in multiple languages are available on the [DDS](#) site. Learn more about the waiver or get help filling out the application from the Waiver Brokers at Autism Connections. See page 7 for their direct contact information. **NEW**



IMPORTANT INFO/UPDATES

[Baker-Polito Administration Submits Revised Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Proposal](#), October 14 **NEW**

[ARC Mass comments about the revised State Budget](#), October 14 **NEW**

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

[Baker-Polito Administration Announces COVID-19 Measures in Place to Ensure Readiness for Fall and Winter](#), October 13 **NEW**

[Baker-Polito Administration announces new initiative to help prevent evictions](#), October 12 **NEW**

[Baker-Polito Administration Announces COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group](#), October 7 **NEW**

[State public health officials offer tips for a safe and healthy Halloween \(includes gathering limits\)](#), October 7 **NEW**

[Baker-Polito Administration Announces New Indoor Visitation Guidance for Nursing Homes, Rest Homes, and Assisted Living Residences](#), September 24 **NEW**

[Baker-Polito Administration Announces New Grant Program to Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19 in Communities of Color](#), September 24 **NEW**

VOTING ESSENTIALS

All voting info [HERE](#).



In-person Early Voting

October 17 - 30

[Learn more about Early Voting and the voting times and locations for your town.](#)

Voter Registration Deadline

October 24 Online, mailed (postmarked) or in-person.

Not sure if you are registered to vote? Check [HERE](#).

Register to vote online [HERE](#).

[Learn more about voter registration HERE.](#)

Request a Ballot by Mail

October 20, Recommended date to submit application for a mail in ballot.

October 28, 5:00 p.m.

Applications received after this date will not be accepted.

[Learn more about requesting a](#)

ballot to vote by mail [HERE](#).

Vote by Mail Application [HERE](#).

Vote by Mail Deadline

November 3 (Postmark) USPS recommends mailing your ballot by October 27

Ballots can be mailed or brought to your local election office, early voting location or a drop box in your city. If the ballot is not mailed it must be delivered in person no later than the election day deadline of 8pm on November 3.

Vote by Mail Instructions [HERE](#).

Accessible Electronic Vote by Mail Deadline (to submit a request for accommodation)

October 28, 5:00 p.m.

[Learn more about the accessible Vote by Mail System for voters with disabilities HERE.](#)

November 3: Election day

Find your voting location [HERE](#).

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

COVID-19 Travel Order: requirements for individuals entering Massachusetts, August 1

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**

IMPORTANT ONGOING RESOURCES

Visitation Policy for DDS Residential Programs **UPDATE 9/23**

Western Massachusetts COVID-19 Case Numbers
UPDATE

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

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

Ticket to work Job Resources. The Ticket to Work (Ticket) Program is designed to support Social Security disability beneficiaries ages 18 through 64 who want to work. This is not a direct hiring program, however, it can connect job seekers with disabilities to job search resources and other employment services and information. **NEW**

Nursing Students, CNA's and Experienced Direct Support Professionals needed. **NEW**

Pathlight Job Opportunities **NEW**

COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits

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

To talk to someone about parental stress or connect with local parenting resources in your area, call the 24/7 Parental Stress Line: 1(800)632-8188 **NEW**

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.

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

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

HEALTH DISABILITY RIGHTS

Civil Rights, HIPPA, and the Coronavirus Disease



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

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 ARE SICK, OR SOMEONE YOU CARE FOR IS SICK

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

- **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

Interactive Map of testing sites

Caring for someone sick at home, from the CDC

SELF ADVOCATES

Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center: (SARTAC). **NEW**

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 sample advocacy letter about patients with intellectual or developmental disabilities having a support person with them when they are in the hospital.

FLU INFORMATION

Springfield Public Schools Flu Shot Clinic: Flu shot clinics will take place in several different school-based locations throughout October. Pre-registration is required. Check www.springfieldpublicschools.com. **NEW**

CDC Information on the Flu Vaccine

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Cooperative Public Health Service: 2020 Flu Clinics

Free flu shots at CVS Pharmacies, find your location

Free flu shots at Walgreen Pharmacies, find your location

SOCIAL STORIES

Back to School Online Learning, from the Autism Research Institute

A wide variety of free school related COVID Social Stories from *Autism Little Learners*

RESOURCES IN OTHER LANGUAGES

<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

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

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.



HOMELESS INFORMATION

Homeless Families Struggle With Impossible Choices As School Closures Continue, from NPR, October 7

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

HOUSING

Webinar October 21, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., **Housing Support**: Meet on Zoom with Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) Director, Amanda Watson and Salasin Project's, Bekki Craig to learn more about what's available and how to apply as well as tips, tools and strategies when looking for housing. **NEW**

Mass. Legislature Leaves Eviction Crisis to Baker, Courts, NECN. Moratorium on evictions ends 10/17. October 15 **NEW**

CDC Issues Sweeping Temporary Halt on Evictions, September 2

FINANCIAL RELATED

IRS Final Guidelines about ABLE Accounts, October 12 **NEW**

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children-TAFDC

IRS Final Guidelines about ABLE Accounts, October 12 **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

Serving Adults: 10 Tips for Doctors Who Want to Have More Autism-Friendly and Neuro-Inclusive Visits, from Autism Housing Network, September 2 **NEW**

Find an Xfinity hotspot for public internet access **NEW**

Greater MA Special Needs Events: this site includes activities, webinars and much more. **UPDATED**

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

Franklin and Hampshire County Resources from Community Action

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

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority: The BRTA has launched a new video regarding riding the bus safely. Watch the videos in English and Spanish at the BRTA website. **NEW**

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 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**



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

DAY PROGRAM RELATED

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

Whole Children/Milestones Rec activities **FALL SESSION 2**

ADVOCACY

Email the Governor's Office or call (617) 725-4005 **NEW**

State Budget On! Ups & Downs, Advocacy Essential in Weeks Ahead, from the Arc of MA, October 15 **NEW**

COVID-19: Budget Updates Released, Including Day Program Rates; Advocacy For Maintenance Needed, from the Arc of Massachusetts, August 18 **NEW**

The Arc of Massachusetts **NEW**

Center for Public Representation **NEW**

Massachusetts Advocates for Children Helpline: (617) 357-8431 ext. 3224 **NEW**

Self Advocacy Resource & Technical Assistance Center **NEW**

EDUCATION RELATED

Springfield Public Schools Flu Shot Clinic: Flu shot clinics will take place in several different school-based locations throughout October. Pre-registration is required. Check website at www.springfieldpublicschools.com. **NEW**

At-Home Learning Resources: from familyeducation.com and Julie Mason, mom of 3, and former classroom teacher. Excellent form templates available for download. **NEW**

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

Family Fact Sheet: COVID-19 Compensatory Services and Recovery Support for Students with IEPs During the COVID-19 Pandemic, from DESE) September 24 **NEW**

Are your children remote learning? Here's how parents can get paid leave from work to take care of them, from Mass Live. September 21 **NEW**

State Guidance Q&A on Special Education and Fall Reopening 2020, from Mass Advocates for Children

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

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

Moving Assessments Forward, May 20

Sample Virtual IEP Agenda

Remote Learning Record

Remote Learning Plan

Family Resource Toolkit from the Department of Education: multiple languages

SURVEYS

Turning 22 During COVID. Turning 22 Survey Committee: The Arc of Massachusetts, AFAM, FCSN, Autism Commission and Mass Families Organizing for Change. Please take a moment to fill out the brief survey of 10 questions (a name is not required and all of the questions are visible from the first click) **NEW**

CONFERENCES/SPECIAL EVENTS

Charting the Life Course for Families - An online leadership training. The CTLC training is offered by MFOFC and MCS. The training is FREE for families and will start at the end of October. **NEW**

October 13-17, The Virtual Autism Summit. Fee based. **NEW**

October 19-October 23, Parenting Summit from Behavior Revolution. Thirty of the world's autism and parenting experts and influencers have come together to share the most effective symptom management and parenting strategies for autistic kids with lower support needs (a.k.a. "high-functioning"), and their parents. FREE option **NEW**

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to Meet October 20, 9 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

October 21 and 22, 10:30-12:30 p.m. PT, A Place in the World: Fueling a New Generation of Housing and Community Options. For those developing or seeking to develop home and community options for people with autism and neurodiversities. **NEW**

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

October 16 and 18, Exploring the Intersection of



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

Disability & Race, from Western Mass Recovery Learning Community. FREE **NEW**

October 18 Registration ends for this October 20 event, From Complaint to Compliance: Analyzing State Education Complaints... a Tool for Parents & Advocates.

Registration ends Oct. 18th. More info: Ned deBary, Special Needs Advocacy Network, Inc. (508) 655-7999, info@spanmass.org. **NEW**

October 20, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., MA Developmental Disabilities Council Public Forum for 5 Year State Plan. **NEW**

October 21, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Housing Support: Meet on Zoom with Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) Director, Amanda Watson and Salasin Project's, Bekki Craig to learn more about what's available and how to apply as well as tips, tools and strategies when looking for housing. **NEW**

October 22, 9:00 a.m., Building Better Remote Learning Experiences with Universally Design Lessons, with the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress. The event link above is through facebook, if you need more information you can also email education@mdsc.org. **NEW**

October 22 @ 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm, The Power of the Disability Vote: Preparing for the 2020 Election, from the Arc. **NEW**

October 29, 4:00 - 5:30 p.m., Keeping Kids Safe: a virtual parent workshop. This parent workshop is designed to help you feel comfortable talking to your children about preventing sexual abuse. To register call The Family Center at 413-664-4821 or email Emilee at ereynolds@ccberkshire.org. This is a collaboration between Child Care of the Berkshires, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and North Adams Public Schools. **NEW**

November 2, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Creating your child's IEP, a free online training for professionals and parents of school age children, with Nancy Farnsworth, Educational Advocate from Autism Connections.

November 5, 10 and 12, 6:00 - 7:30pm, How to Administer a Special Needs Trust. This annual training and update for Parents, Trustees and Successor Trustees of Special Needs Trusts and OBRA '93 Trusts. **NEW**

November 8, 2020, 7:30 PM - November 9, 2020, 5:00 PM., Massachusetts Initiative to Improve

Transition to Adult Healthcare for Individuals with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, from Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, for professionals and parents. Results of task forces will be presented during this webinar. FREE to families, fee based for professionals **NEW**

WEBINARS-PREVIOUS

Family Empowerment/Autism Connections recent Webinar archive with PowerPoint Presentations and Recordings. **NEW**

SUPPORT GROUPS

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 and often has outside speakers. Email caroline.wenck@pathlightgroup.org for more information. Email caroline.wenck@pathlightgroup.org for more information. **ONGOING**

Autism Connections Western MA Support Group: This 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. **ONGOING**

Special Education Forum, Families Helping Families meets every other 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/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 2**

SELF-CARE

McLean Hospital is excited to share free resources this October for the public and professionals in hopes of promoting healthy individuals and communities. Check upcoming events and sign up for access to past webinars.



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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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 prefer to call, the numbers for program managers are listed on our team directory on page 7.

Please share this newsletter with other people you think may be interested in the resources.

 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 Editor Joanne Lucey at joanne.lucey@pathlightgroup.org if you have difficulty accessing a link in the newsletter, if you would like to suggest a resource or if you have any general comments.



OCTOBER IS DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS MONTH

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs in one in every 792 births. It is the most frequently occurring chromosomal condition. More than 206,000 people in the United States have Down syndrome, and approximately 95 babies with Down syndrome are born each year in Massachusetts.

Learn more about Down Syndrome from the [Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress](#).