Here at Pathlight (including Autism Connections, Whole Children, Milestones and Family Empowerment) we have been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic for several weeks and we continue to actively assess the situation and respond according to the current and anticipated situation. The Pathlight Executive Leadership Team is regularly evaluating credible information, working with our funders, and implementing strategies to support the Pathlight community. Below is a current report on our situation. We will update this as needed. View the Pathlight information page on our website.

**Programs and Offices**

In an effort to protect the individuals we serve and the staff who care for them, we are practicing social distancing by minimizing the number of people in our worksites and our in-person interactions with co-workers. We are working to arrange for as many staff as possible to work remotely.

All of our sites (offices and residences) are closed to visitors and our offices will have minimal staff and services available. By doing this, we limit the number of potential contacts between people and therefore the opportunities for spread. This also allows the leadership team to focus our efforts on doing everything we can to support and protect the essential staff that we count on to come into work and provide critical services for the people we serve.

Critical functions such as health and safety trainings and rep payee processing functions will continue in our Springfield Office. We will continue to be here for staff, care providers and families via phone and email.

**Residential**

All Residential homes will be checking temperatures of staff when they report to work and sending people home if their temperature is 100.3 per current CDC recommendation. We are restricting visitors to our homes and are setting up webcams in homes to help families stay in touch.

**Family Services**

Family Services are curtailing physical home visits unless approved by management for a specific situation. They will be calling and video conferencing with families, care providers and individuals on a regular basis.

**Whole Children/Milestones enrichment classes UPDATE**

All in-person classes are cancelled until at least early May. 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 for the month of April. Dates for the summer session are July 6 to August 21 and may take place if restrictions are lifted. Stay tuned for all of our online offerings as they become available!

**Milestones Day Program, Inclusive Community Center UPDATE**

Milestones is not offering in person services until further notice, but virtual check-ins and online classes are being offered and our schedule online classes will be expanded in the coming days.

**Hand Washing with Baby Shark!**

It’s all about the hand washing...our Executive Director Ruth Banta gathers up some friends to show you how. Watch our very kid-friendly video: [https://www.facebook.com/PathlightGroupMA/videos/681785992571946/](https://www.facebook.com/PathlightGroupMA/videos/681785992571946/).
AUTISM CONNECTIONS AND FAMILY EMPOWERMENT EVENTS

Family Empowerment Workshops
Workshops will continue as virtual events whenever possible. Please check the Family Empowerment Facebook page for information.

Our Coffee and Conversation series will continue 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
Events and activities will continue virtually when possible. Stay connected for more information. We are currently running some private online groups for individuals who were already connected to specific programs.

Whole Children and Milestones Recreation classes
All in-person classes are cancelled until at least early May. 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 for the month of April. Dates for the summer session are July 6 to August 21 and may take place if restrictions are lifted. Stay tuned for all of our online offerings as they become available.

STATE, FEDERAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; check this site for all updated COVID-19 information.

Essential services during Stay at Home Order; check this information to see which organizations deemed essential in Massachusetts are allowed to continue services.

MA Department of Public Health
Mass.gov: updated general state information relative to COVID-19.
https://www.mass.gov/lists/coronavirus-resources-for-dds-families-and-individuals

Information about Covid-19 in plain language for individuals with disabilities
Call 211: Non-emergency state information service
World Health Organization

State, Special Education Related

State mandates local provision of remote special educational services during COVID-19 emergency
http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/covid19.html
Coronavirus/Covid-19 Frequently Asked Questions For Schools And Districts Regarding Special Education - March 17, 2020

Federal, Special Education Related

Questions And Answers On Providing Services To Children With Disabilities During The Coronavirus Disease Outbreak- Issued March 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

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

Taking care of your emotional health and well-being during this time is important. Decreasing stress can help bolster your immune system and can help keep you and others around you healthy. 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.

COVID-19: Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Resources

SCHOOL RELATED SERVICES

Providing special education services during this time (Federal resources)

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

Educators/PT/Speech/OT/Behavior Specialists/Nurses/Consultants who want to help you and are willing to offer consultations online. Get more information and fill out the form HERE.

Remote Learning Recommendations during COVID-19 School Closures

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.

Berkshire County programs and schedule
Franklin County programs and schedule
Hampden County programs and schedule
   Holyoke
   Springfield
Hampshire County programs and schedule
Northampton Survival Center Update
https://www.servings.org/

Food stamps online application
Western Mass Community Mutual Aid Website

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.
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

General information
Simos Produce: Pre-packed grocery box items, 2 box minimum delivery.
Instacart: groceries, especially in the Berkshires.

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS
Western Mass listing of school lunch programs

SUPPORT FOR THE HOMELESS
From the Mass Coalition for the Homeless:
Access to shelter: With office closures until at least April 3rd, 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 has funding to help homeless adults who have found an apartment with their move-in costs. Call for more information or to be screened
call the Community Resources and Advocacy program at 413-475-1570 or 413-582-4237.

TRANSPORTATION

Most transportation at this time is only being used for essential workers and emergencies since it is a safety issue and difficult to practice social distancing. Options to find a ride: https://www.mass.gov/im-looking-for-transportation. Contact us at hstmobility@state.ma.us.

PVTA Service Update 4-1-20: PVTA is providing transportation for ESSENTIAL TRIPS ONLY.
Riders must be travelling to an essential destination. All riders are required to exit the bus at the end of its route and may not re-board the same vehicle for a return trip. Multiple or consecutive round trips are not permitted and riders who appear to be loitering on the bus will be asked to de-board.

If you are sick, do not take PVTA. If urgent medical care is needed, use a personal vehicle or call an ambulance to get to the provider’s location. Call 413-781-7882 for more information.

CHILDCARE

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

ADVOCACY

The Arc: Advocacy related to pandemic legislation

ONLINE GROUPS WEBINARS

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

MassPAC Monday, Transition Tuesday, Wellness, Wednesday, Thriving Thursday, Facts Friday

Western MA Recovering Learning Community
The Western Mass Recovery Learning Community (RLC) supports healing and empowerment for our broader communities and people who have been impacted by psychiatric diagnosis, trauma, extreme states, homelessness, problems with substances, and other life-interrupting challenges. See their new, temporary listing on online support groups HERE. Call (866) 641-2853 for more information.

Update on COVID-19 and Remote Learning:
Supporting Students and Families (co-sponsored by SPaN and the Federation for Children with Special Needs) April 3, 11:00am

AANE (Asperger autism network)
Check out upcoming online events here. Call 617-393-3824 x32 for more information. Please include your name, phone number, city you live in, and (if possible) your email address. There is a wide variety of online events 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. This Special Needs Housing and Transition Meeting event co-sponsored by the Autism Insurance Resource Center at UMass Worcester.
About the Speaker: Mary Rubenis is 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

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.

HEAT AND ELECTRIC SERVICES

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

Eversource Eversource Statement: “We’ve suspended disconnections, late fees and are offering a special, flexible payment plan — with no down payment — for any past-due amount to help customers in response to COVID-19.” 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 SERVICES

Comcast

Comcast has taken immediate steps to help connect low-income families to the Internet at home. Apply by April 30, 2020. Call 1-855-846-8376 for information.

Charter/Spectrum

Charter will offer free Spectrum broadband and Wi-Fi access for 60 days to households with K-12 who do not already have a Spectrum broadband subscription and at any service level up to 100 Mbps. To enroll call 1-844-488-8395 or click HERE.

GENERAL RESOURCES

Boston Medical Center: Health, activity, education and other resources

HOW TO MANAGE TIME AT HOME

A Spectrum of Ideas for Autism at Home (Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism): The First 8 Steps for Tackling This Quarantine for Families Affected by Autism

Tips for Eating Healthy when you are working from 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


FAMILIAS: Buscando Ayuda para Nuestros Niños con Planes de Educación Individualizados/Necesidades de Apoyo

Información de COVID-19 Por y Para Personas con Discapacidades


https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-printable-fact-sheets (in many languages)

SOCIAL STORIES

Let’s Talk About the Coronavirus

FUN ONLINE ACTIVITIES!

Hilltown Families: local activities

Virtual Broadway Plays

Amazing Education is a website full of virtual tours, home school ideas and general activities. Visit the list of resources here.

Daily online dance sessions (and much more) through Bridgewell Family Support Center (scroll to bottom to see the calendar)

Virtual Field Trips: a collection of 30 virtual tours of museums, aquariums, zoos and other sites.

Educational offerings in support of at-home music learning from the Boston Symphony Orchestra.
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**

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

**Pathlight Group, 413-585-8010**

**Community Connection Newsletter**

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**Autism Connections**

- **Ben Breton**, Autism Specialist, benjamin.breton@pathlightgroup.org, 413.443.4780
- **Kansas Brown**, Easthampton Program Manager, kansas.brown@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5091
- **Lora Cortis**, DESE Coordinator, lora.cortis@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5091
- **Amber Curry**, DESE/Autism Waiver, Specialist, amber.curry@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5089
- **Erica Donovan**, AC Berkshire Program Manager, erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org, 413.443.4780
- **Carla Doyle-Florence**, Autism Waiver Broker, carla.doyle-florence@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5088
- **Nancy Farnsworth**, Educational Advocate/Information Consultant, nancy.farnsworth@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5087
- **Elizabeth Flaherty**, Autism Specialist, elizabeth.flaherty@pathlightgroup.org, 413.443.4780
- **Lee Guilbault**, IFFS Specialist, lee.guilbault@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5086
- **William Liverpool**, Autism Waiver Broker, habla espanol, william.liverpool@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5085
- **Joanne Lucey**, Project Manager/Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Autism Connections and Family Empowerment, joanne.lucey@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5084
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- **Kelly Summers**, Autism Specialist, kelly.summers@pathlightgroup.org, 413.443.4780
- **Kim Wyckoff**, Autism Waiver Broker, kim.wyckoff@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5079

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- **Caroline Wencik**, Family Support Specialist, caroline.wencik@pathlightgroup.org, 413-585-8010, x122
- **Tanya White**, Agency with Choice Coordinator, tanya.white@pathlightgroup.org, 413.585.8010, x127

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- **Rosie Chau**, Adult Program Assistant, hong.chau@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5078
- **Tanya Celetti**, Adult Program Assistant, tanya.celetti@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5076
- **Hector Rodriguez**, Adult Program Assistant, hector.rodriguez@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5077
- **Tammy Wright**, Adult Program Assistant, tammy.wright@pathlightgroup.org, 413.779.5082

**Family Based Living**

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- **Darlene Giroux**, Program Director, darlene.giroux@PathlightGroup.org, 413-731-4554
- **Suzanne LABA**, Program Director, suzanne.laba@PathlightGroup.org, 413-731-4649
- **Lakesha RUTH**, Program Director, lakesha.ruth@PathlightGroup.org, 413-731-4541
- **Michael AGUDA**, Placement Coordinator, michael.aguda@PathlightGroup.org, 413-731-4542
- **Wendy Bouquet**, Placement Coordinator, wendy.bouquet@PathlightGroup.org, 413-731-4538
- **Lorrie Brown**, Registered Nurse, lorrie.brown@PathlightGroup.org, 413-731-0531, ext 255
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- **Justin Roccabruna**, Placement Coordinator, justin.rocca@PathlightGroup.org, 413-443-4780 x13
- **Alene Walter**, Placement Coordinator, alene.walter@PathlightGroup.org, 413-443-4780 x14
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.

Can you help us?

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

To all our friends,

"MASK MAKER, MASK MAKER, MAKE ME A MASK"

Pathlight staff and direct care could use any masks you’re making!
Email us at info@pathlightgroup.org to donate.

Please note that all information is subject to change as the situation and supports or activities evolve. If you have questions or need help, email us at info@pathlightgroup.org, autismconnections@pathlightgroup.org or familyempowerment@pathlightgroup.org.