



# Community Connection Newsletter

resources for the community

April 22, 2020



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## THE PATHLIGHT COMMUNITY

Pathlight Executive Director Ruth Banta reaches out to the full Pathlight team several times each week with organizational updates, relevant community and state guidelines and inspirational thoughts. Recently she shared some important information via video.

The first video focused on hand washing, one of Ruth's favorite topics! The video very effectively demonstrates the right way to wash hands, using paint to see how easy it is to miss cleaning certain areas of our hands. Even veteran hand washers have something to learn from these tips. View the video [here](#).

Ruth also shared a [video](#) featuring Paragus IT CEO [Delcie Bean](#), where he discusses the heightened need for cybersecurity as more people work from home and participate in online experiences. A special guest, Pluto, lightens the mood with a surprise visit!

Another resource from Ruth highlights the ongoing need for personal protective equipment and the extraordinary [experience of a Baystate Health official](#) who tries to procure a supply of masks and respirators, as documented in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

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

### Whole Children/Milestones Recreation enrichment classes

Whole Children and Milestones Recreation are offering free [online classes](#)! Visit [www.wholechildren.org](http://www.wholechildren.org), click on 'community' and scroll down to our calendar to check out the selection! From there you can simply click on the class and find the link to join. Classes include Minecraft, Animal Crossing, Self-Advocacy, Art Explorations, Dungeons & Dragons, Smash Brothers, Harry Potter Club, Music and Dance, Manga & Anime, Boundaries & Relationships and Indonesian Kung Fu.

### Milestones Day Program

Milestones continues to expand its online classes and groups to keep day program participants engaged and having fun!

### Autism Connections

Our Pittsfield office has been offering a *Navigating Social Nuances* class since October 2017. The group is at the maximum number of participants and is composed of ten young adults who are 18 or older. Currently NSN meets online two days per week and will return to physical meetings when possible.

The Pittsfield office is also a founding member of The [Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County](#). ACBC is a group of local autism service providers and agencies working together to educate, advocate for and raise awareness of the services available in our community to families.

### Family Empowerment

***Becoming Person-Centered: For Families with Cheryl Ryan Chan, May 6, 2020, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.***

*Virtual workshop*

Families who attend the workshop will be entered into a lottery (if they wish) to win **three FREE sessions of Person-Centered Planning** with Cheryl. Check the Family Empowerment [Facebook page](#) for information as it becomes available.

## Charting the LifeCourse Tools. May 12, 2020

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., *Virtual workshop*

Learn how Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) tools can be used by families for future planning.

Check the Family Empowerment [Facebook page](#) for workshop information as it becomes available.

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.

## IMPORTANT UPDATES

[Governor Baker announces extension of school and non-emergency child care closures](#) **NEW**

[Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#), news from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley on school closures through the end of the school year. *The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Problem Resolution Hotline is 781-338-3700.* **NEW**

Workforce Development Secretary Acosta announced 4/20/20 that those not eligible for regular unemployment assistance can now apply for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance in MA. [Apply here.](#) **NEW**

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

[Who will NOT receive a stimulus check](#)

[Private Student Loan Relief Announced for Massachusetts Borrowers](#) **NEW**

[Baker-Polito Administration Announces COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative to Further Mitigate the Spread of Virus](#) **NEW**

[Disability Law Center's recent letter to the MA Commissioner of Public Health regarding reasonable accommodations for Persons with Disabilities](#): the letter can be downloaded and attached to an e-mail. **NEW**

[Grocery Store employees test site at The Big E.](#) **NEW**

[Send Governor Baker an email to address biases in COVID-19 Health Care Triage](#) (via The Arc of MA). **NEW**

## IMPORTANT RESOURCES

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

[Baker-Polito Administration Announces COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative to Further Mitigate the Spread of Virus](#) **NEW**

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[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 \(CMS\)](#)

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

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

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

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

[Domestic Violence Resources](#)

[Call 211](#)

[Massachusetts Crisis Hotlines](#)

## State, Special Education Related

[Mass Advocates for Children](#)

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

## Small Businesses

[Small Business Relief programs](#) **NEW**

## COVID-19 Economic Impact Payments

If you do not currently receive direct deposits for Social Security payment, create a direct deposit account [here](#) for your stimulus check.

[General Social Security information](#)

[Who will NOT receive a stimulus check](#)



## 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. [File a claim online.](#)

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

[Pandemic Unemployment Benefits: Unemployment Assistance for Those Not Eligible for Regular Unemployment Benefits](#)

## HEALTH SERVICES

[Masshealth Information](#) (call MassHealth at (800) 841-2900) or click on the link for all MassHealth info.

**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.

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.

MassHealth will supply some members with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) so they can continue to receive home services if someone is sick in the home.

**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

[Grocery Store employees can receive free tests at The Big E](#) **NEW**

[Buoy Health Care Tool:](#) check symptoms online

## 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:](#) 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. 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).

## EDUCATION RELATED

[Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,](#) April 21 news from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley on school closures through the end of the school year. **NEW**

[SEPAC Best Practices During Covid-19](#) **NEW**

[Remote Learning Daily Tracking Form](#) **NEW**

[A simple approach to help your child with IEP goals while sheltering at home](#) **NEW**

Emerson Collective is a social change organization that uses a broad range of tools including philanthropy, impact investing, and policy solutions to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Over the coming days, we plan to share best-practice resources, beginning today with [this list for students, parents, and educators.](#) **NEW**

[WGBH - Distance Learning Center Tools:](#) Well organized and not overwhelming!

[Maintaining Transition Skills at Home](#)

[Best Educational Netflix shows for all ages](#) **NEW**

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

[The ARC Special Education Updates Special Education Family Resource Toolkit](#) from the Department of Education. **NEW**

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

impact investing, and policy solutions to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Their website has [great resources for remote learning](#). **NEW**

## SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

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

[Springfield Schools expanding meal plan to include dinner](#)

## HEALTH DISABILITY RIGHTS

[Disability Law Center's recent letter to the MA Commissioner of Public Health regarding reasonable accommodations for Persons with Disabilities](#): the letter urges the adoption of a statewide hospital visitor policy that includes reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities who require a support person to remain with them in the hospital. The letter can be downloaded or attached to an email if you would like to send a letter to the commissioner yourself. **NEW**

[Civil Rights, HIPAA, 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.

## 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.

<https://www.facebook.com/Federacionlatino/>

<https://www.facebook.com/grupodeapoiodafederacao/>

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

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

Mass Advocates for Children: [facebook.com/groups/MACEspanol/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/MACEspanol/) **NEW**

[Bilingual video for children explaining COVID-19 for Haitian families](#). **NEW**

[Special Education Family Resource Toolkit](#) from the Department of Education. **NEW**

## FOOD PANTRIES & OTHER RELATED SUPPORT

Find a food bank or food distribution site near you [HERE](#), or contact the Food Bank of Western MA at 413-247-9738.

[Northampton Survival Center Update](#)

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

[Food stamps online application \(SNAP\)](#) 877) 382-2363

[Extra SNAP Benefits](#): Congress approved special SNAP supplement benefits in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 877-382-2363.

[Western Mass Community Mutual Aid Website](#)

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

[General information](#)

[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](#)

[Stop & Shop/Uber discount ride offer for 60+](#)

[Berkshires List of Restaurant Delivery/Pick up](#)

[List of Northampton restaurants with delivery/pick up](#)

## SUPPORT FOR THE HOMELESS

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

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





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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 4-21-20: PVTA is providing transportation for ESSENTIAL TRIPS ONLY. Call 413-781-7882 for more information. **NEW**

## CHILDCARE

[https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC\\_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure](https://eeclead.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.

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.

## ADVOCACY/STUDIES

The Arc: legislative priorities related to COVID-19

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities and current policy priorities

Send Governor Baker an email to address biases in COVID-19 Health Care Triage (via The Arc of MA)

Disability Law Center's recent letter to the MA Commissioner of Public Health regarding reasonable accommodations for Persons with Disabilities: the letter can be downloaded and attached to an e-mail. **NEW**

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 who plan graduate with a regular HS diploma. **NEW**

Boston University's Study for Adult Siblings of People with Autism **NEW**

## WEBINARS/GROUPS

**April 23, 1 p.m.,** Planning a Life: Transition Considerations for your Child's Future. **NEW**

**April 23, 2 p.m.,** Supported Decision Making, an alternative to Guardianship, from the ARC. **NEW**

**Ensuring Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities,** **April 23, 4 p.m.** **NEW**

**April 23, 8 p.m.,** Helping your child manage anxiety during COVID-19, Mass Advocates for Children. **NEW**

**April 23, 6-7 p.m.,** Anxiety and Autism, Michael Wilcox with the Northeast Arc.

**April 29, 7 p.m.,** Ask the Expert, from AANE, Nancy Roosa, PsyD, and practicing pediatric neuropsychologist answers any questions you might have about neuropsychological evaluations. **NEW**

**May 12, 10:00 a.m.,** Attainable: The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE). Info about the plan [here.](#) **NEW**

Creating an Intentional Community: watch the recorded webinar from MFOFC. **NEW**

### Weekly or recurring events or groups

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

Parent Training: Everyday ABA, from Boston Medical Autism Program. A six week training - download sessions at your convenience. **NEW**

Greater Massachusetts Special Needs events

Autism Research Institute: weekly webinars, excellent topics relating to a wide range of families.

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.

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

A Spectrum of Difference: Very interesting groups, activities and education.



## YOUNG ADULT ACTIVITIES

**April 23, 6 p.m.** AANE Netflix Watch Party: Ferris Bueller's Day Off, This watch party is for any adult with an Asperger/autism profile. **NEW**

**April 27, 6:30 p.m.**, AANE Virtual Game Night, This event is open to any post-high-school adult on the spectrum anywhere. The event is free, but advance registration is required and we only have space for 15 players! **NEW**

## 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: 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.

Mortgage: Consumer Hotline Call Attorney General's Consumer Advocacy & Response Division, (617) 727-8400, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. **NEW**

## THE CENSUS

What is the Census? A plain language document. **NEW**

## GENERAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES

Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on Caregiving: extensive and excellent resources related to COVID-19 **NEW**

Federation for children with special needs: disability related resources

Tips For Working With Support Staff During COVID-19, written by individuals with disabilities.

Family toolkit from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Excellent toolkit with specific need relations resources

Adlib Resource Guide

## SOCIAL STORIES

What to expect from the COVID-19 Swab Test (checklist) **NEW**

What to expect from the COVID-19 Swab Test (story) **NEW**

## LEGAL RESOURCES

Disability Law Center: Know your rights

## SELF-CARE

Six Daily Questions to Ask Yourself While Social Distancing: Sheltering in place and the new routines that come with it can be disorienting. Here's a list of questions that will help you check in with yourself every day. **NEW**

How to strengthen immunity **NEW**

## FUN THINGS!

Virtual family activities from the Berkshire County ARC, including Mindfulness, Trivia, Book Club, and a knitting group. **NEW**

Whole Children, virtual classes and activities **NEW**

52 Places to travel virtually, from the New York Times. **NEW**

Drawing With Kids: 5 Ideas to Stay Creative With a Pencil and a Piece of Paper, from the Getty Museum. **NEW**

The Bridge Family Resource Center, Amherst MA, virtual groups and activities **NEW**

Valuing our Children in Athol calendar of daily virtual activities.

Bridgewell: Dance Parties and fitness groups daily.

Coloring books! Libraries, archives, and cultural institutions around the world shared downloadable coloring sheets & books based on materials in their collections. **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](mailto:info@pathlightgroup.org), [familyempowerment@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:familyempowerment@pathlightgroup.org) or [autismconnections@pathlightgroup.org](mailto: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.

*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 [info@wholechildren.org](mailto:info@wholechildren.org), [info@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:info@pathlightgroup.org), [autismconnections@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:autismconnections@pathlightgroup.org) or [familyempowerment@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:familyempowerment@pathlightgroup.org).*

## Respite employment opportunity available

Pathlight is currently seeking a respite provider for one of our families in Chicopee. Ideal candidates would have experience working with individuals with autism and would preferably be willing to provide overnight care in the family's home (though not a requirement).

If you are 18 years or older, have a reliable vehicle, and are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please call Pathlight's Homestudy & Family Resource Coordinator at (413) 731-4548 or email, [FamilyBasedLiving@PathlightGroup.org](mailto:FamilyBasedLiving@PathlightGroup.org)

See our [career page](#) for more job opportunities.