



Community Connection Newsletter

resources for the community

April 29, 2020



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Autism Connections
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THE PATHLIGHT COMMUNITY

The Pathlight Community is a collection of amazing people, including families, collaborators, volunteers, donors and employees. Here is an introduction to one inspirational person, Dr. Mariame Kounta, Pathlight's Director of Nursing. In this podcast, we learn about her journey from Mali to Senegal to the U.S. and how she was able to attend college, raise children, work full time, and get her graduate degree without collapsing!

Her philosophy about the need to balance emotional, physical and spiritual energy is something we can all learn from. **podcast!**

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

Whole Children/Milestones Recreation enrichment classes

Whole Children and Milestones Recreation continue to offer a variety of free [online](#) classes! Visit www.wholechildren.org to check out the options on the calendar. Here are some of the Whole Children and Milestones teachers, giving a shout out from their remote offices in this "must see" **video!**

Autism Connections

Team members are very busy keeping contact with families connected to the various programs of Autism Connections. Those programs are the Autism Waiver, the IFFS program (Intensive Flexible Family Supports), the DESE program (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education), Adult Supports and Agency with Choice. Families in these programs let us know what they need for resources, and the specialists provide services and assistance through email, phone calls and face to face virtual connections. We are looking forward to seeing everyone again in person!

Family Empowerment

Becoming Person-Centered: For Families with Cheryl Ryan Chan, May 6, 2020, 6-8 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. **Learn more and RSVP. NEW**

Family Empowerment's Coffee and Conversation Zoom meetings continue with a new line up of events!

Sunday Mornings: reserve an appointment with a Pathlight specialist to review a topic of your choice on 5/3!

Choose your topic of conversation and reserve a private appointment for this Sunday's event at 9:30 a.m. RSVP and details [HERE](#). **NEW**

Keep an eye on our Facebook page for additional meetings on Thursday morning and evening to meet with a specialist.

Special Education Topics with Pathlight's Special Education Advocate Nancy Farnsworth, 5/5, 10 a.m.

This is the meeting for you if you have questions about current Special Education Topics. RSVP and more information [HERE](#). **NEW**

Person Centered Planning with Cheryl Chan, 5/6

This webinar will explore how the Person-Centered approach can be used to inform the conversations with systems supports (IEPs and ISPs), promote key skills, activities, and outcomes for a person and their family. Upon webinar

registration, you may choose to be included in a lottery to win three Person-Centered planning sessions with Cheryl. RSVP [HERE](#). **NEW**

Charting the LifeCourse Tools, May 12, 2020, 6-8 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.

IMPORTANT UPDATES THIS WEEK

[DESE Commissioner's Updated Report of Remote Learning Guidance for Massachusetts Schools](#) **NEW**

[Pandemic EBT \(PEBT\)](#): information about extended food stamp benefits. **NEW**

[Baker-Polito Administration Extends Non-Essential Business Closures to May 18th](#) **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](#)

[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](#)

[Guía de Asistencia para Beneficios de Desempleo por Pandemia](#) **NEW**

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.

[How To Get The Most Out Of Your Virtual Medical Appointment](#) from National Public Radio. **NEW**

[MassHealth Telehealth Services for Behavioral Health Governor Baker's Expansion of Telehealth Services Order](#)

[MassHealth Telehealth Services for Behavioral Health](#)

General Health Related Information

[How To Get The Most Out Of Your Virtual Medical Appointment](#) from National Public Radio. **NEW**

Disability COVID-19 Healthcare Support Advocacy Hotline 800-626-4959

Mental Health Resources

[Western Mass Mental Health Resources](#), from Community Action. **NEW**

[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).

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.

IF THE PERSON YOU CARE FOR IS SICK

[COVID-19 Disability Form](#) to have ready for the hospital if you to show that an individual needs someone to help them while hospitalized. **NEW**

[Healthcare Passport](#) **NEW**

EDUCATION RELATED

[DESE Commissioner's Updated Report of Remote Learning Guidance for Massachusetts Schools](#) **NEW**

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

[Remote Learning Daily Tracking Form](#)

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

[SPaN: School Closure and Special Education Rights](#) **NEW**

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

[Maintaining Transition Skills at Home](#)

[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.](#)

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

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



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

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

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.

[Guía de Asistencia para Beneficios de Desempleo por Pandemia](#) **NEW**

[Los servicios de salud están cambiando su sistema de atención al servicio en línea: Lo que necesita saber sobre el "telehealth"](#) **NEW**

<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/)

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

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

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](#) (delivery available elsewhere)

[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.

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 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.

CHILDCARE

https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure



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

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.

Childcare Aware of America: Their recent Child Care during COVID-19: Guidance and Implementation from the experts webinar is available in slides. **NEW**

ADVOCACY/STUDIES

The Arc: legislative priorities related to COVID-19

Share your story with the Arc: People with disabilities, their families, and the direct support professional workforce can't be left out of coronavirus response legislation. Share your story now!

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 30, 8 p.m., Addressing the needs of transition age youth, MA Advocates for Children. **NEW**

May 3, Sunday 9:30-11:00 a.m., Sunday morning coffee with a Pathlight Specialist: choose your topic, choose your time. More sessions will be scheduled for Thursday mornings and evenings. **NEW**

May 5, 10:00 a.m., Special Education Topics with Pathlight's Education Advocate, Nancy Farnsworth **NEW**

May 6, 6-8 p.m., Person-Centered Planning with Cheryl Ryan Chan: Take advantage of the opportunity to be entered into a lottery to receive 3 FREE sessions with Cheryl. Four families will receive free sessions. More information and RSVP HERE.

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

May 12, What are You Worried About? Treating Fears, Phobias and Emotional Distress in Children. Training from PPAL. **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.

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

AANE events for April and March

Whole Children/Milestones activities



Be sure to check out the great mask idea on page 12

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.

THE CENSUS

What is the Census? A plain language document.

GENERAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES

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

COVID-19 Resources for families: this is a long list of resources, but includes excellent information that may not be included elsewhere. **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 (Berkshires)

SOCIAL STORIES

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

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

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.

How to strengthen immunity

FUN THINGS!

New selection of free books from audible, including children's' selections and some classics for adults. This may be your chance to relax with a book you've been meaning to read for a long time! **NEW**

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

Whole Children, virtual classes and activities

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

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

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.



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

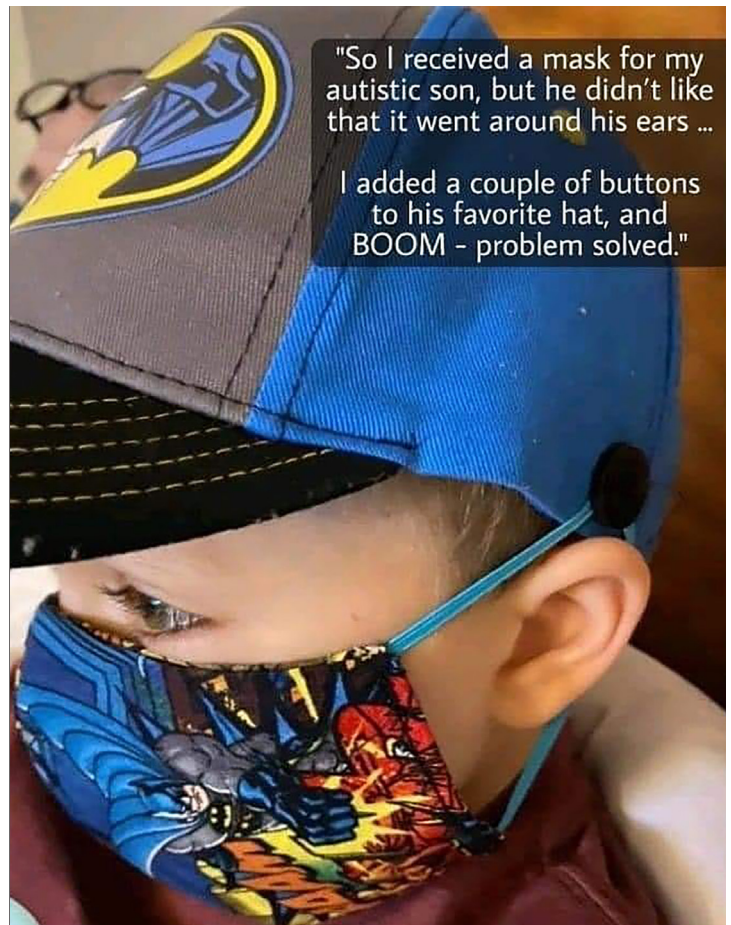
How can we help you?

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 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, info@pathlightgroup.org, autismconnections@pathlightgroup.org or familyempowerment@pathlightgroup.org.



"So I received a mask for my autistic son, but he didn't like that it went around his ears ...

I added a couple of buttons to his favorite hat, and BOOM - problem solved."

Photo courtesy of [My Mind](#)