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.

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

HEALTH DISABILITY RIGHTS
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 ARE SICK, OR SOMEONE YOU CARE FOR IS SICK
Forms to have on hand for hospital admission of someone with a disability

- 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

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.


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.

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 Reunión 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/

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
**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**


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.

**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
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

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
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. NEW

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. ONGOING

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.
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.