

Family Connections Center

FRONT PAGE

- 2015 Southeastern MA Community Resource and Craft Fair.....1

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- A Path to Wisdom.....2

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- ABLE Act.....3
- Schools Warned on Speech Services for Kids with Autism.....4
- Attorney General Healey announces Creation of Disability Rights Advisory Committee.....5
- Southeast Mass Family Leadership Series 24.....6

INFORMATION TO SHARE

- A Full Life Ahead Series "Planning for the Good Things of Life".....7
- Transition from School to Adult Life Conference.....8
- MASS Autism Omnibus Law Workshop.....9
- Growing Up with Down Syndrome: Living a Longer, Healthier and Meaningful Life.....10
- Save the Date: Sibshop.....11
- Family Leave.....11
- Open Enrollment for the Autism Waiver Program.....12



SOUTHEASTERN MA COMMUNITY RESOURCE & CRAFT FAIR



Dartmouth High Field House
555 Bakerville Road
Dartmouth, MA



Food for *Thought*

A Path to Wisdom

From the www.disabilityisnatural.com E-Newsletter by Kathie Snow

I'm a voracious reader: non-fiction books for learning and fiction for fun. Over the years, I've learned many valuable lessons from fiction (including mysteries, my favorite). I devour them before going to sleep, on airplanes, in airports, and at other "break" times, via Ebooks from my local library.

I've recently been enjoying several titles from the "Inspector Gamache" series by the talented Canadian author Louise Penny. Her books are set in the lovely areas of Montreal, Quebec and surrounding towns and villages, and they feature fascinating characters and unusual murders!

Chief Inspector Gamache, head of Quebec homicide, learned from his mentor; in turn, he shares this wisdom with the officers under him. Now I'm sharing it with you. Here is Inspector Gamache's lesson:

There are four sentences that lead to wisdom.

I'm sorry.

I don't know.

I was wrong.

I need help.

"Chief Inspector Gamache" series by Louise Penny

Little more needs to be said, right?

I made the text larger and in color, hoping you'll find value in posting this entire document on a bulletin board or on your refrigerator, or otherwise placing it where it can be a daily reminder. (I have!)

These words can help us achieve wisdom in many situations. But within the disability arena, imagine the power they could have if family members, teachers, therapists, doctors, service providers, and anyone who touches the life of a child or adult with a disability made these words part of their everyday interactions with that person. There are things we've done that we should be sorry for. We *don't* know everything. We *are* often wrong. And, yes, we *do* need help. We may even need help from that child or adult with a disability in our lives. What a life-changer that could be!

Available *Resources*



ABLE Act (Achieving a Better Life Experience) Will Allow People with Disabilities to save \$100,000

Beginning in late 2015, many people with disabilities and their families will have a new savings tool. On December 19, 2014 President Obama signed P.L. 113-295, which amends certain sections of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. Division B of this legislation is enacted to “provide for the tax treatment of ABLE accounts established under State programs for the care of family members with disabilities, and for other purposes.”

Until now, disabled people could have no more than \$2000 in savings without risking their eligibility for Social Security Disability, Medicaid and other public benefits. Under the new law, a person with a disability can save up to \$14,000 per year, and up to \$100,000 total, and retain his or her eligibility for these benefits.

The private savings in an ABLE account are meant to supplement, not supplant public benefits, the beneficiary’s wages and other sources. The savings can be used for qualified disability expenses including education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology, personal support services, health care expenses, financial management and administrative services. You must have become disabled before the age of 26.

The U. S. Treasury has been tasked with writing regulations to implement this legislation during 2015 and the states are to begin accepting applications to open ABLE Accounts by the end of 2015. ABLE Act Accounts can be used in addition to Special Needs or Pooled Income Trusts.

ABLE Act Update

MEFA (Mass. Educational Financing Authority) is moving ahead with development of the Massachusetts ABLE Act program. Three specific activities include:

- **Reviewing the proposed IRS (Internal Revenue Service) regulations for the ABLE act provided this past June and waiting to hear any changes after public comments are completed on September 21.**

- **Preparing to addressing items to amend our state ABLÉ act authorization to comply with final federal regulations (state house action). HD. 3853 has been filed to address changes to our present ABLÉ program authorization.**
- **The ABLÉ act working committee continues to meet to review implementation strategy, key program definitions, administrative requirements and marketing approaches.**

Schools Warned On Speech Services for Kids With Autism

By Michelle Diament, Disability Scoop

Federal education officials are reminding schools not to skimp on needed speech and language services for children with autism.

In a [letter](#) to states, officials from the U.S. Department of Education say they've heard that an increasing number of kids on the spectrum may not be receiving services from speech-language pathologists at school. Moreover, such professionals are frequently left out of the evaluation process and are often not present at meetings to determine what services a child should receive under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the department said.

"Some IDEA programs may be including applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapists exclusively without including, or considering input from, speech-language pathologists and other professionals who provide different types of specific therapies that may be appropriate for children with ASD when identifying IDEA services for children with ASD," wrote Melody Musgrove, director of the Education Department's Office of Special Education Programs, in the guidance sent this month.

Musgrove said her agency is worried that this issue is impacting students in special education programs serving infants and toddlers as well as K-12 schools.

Under IDEA, schools have an obligation to fully evaluate children with disabilities to assess their specific needs. For young kids, the law requires that the person who conducted the evaluation be included in the team determining what services a child will receive. Meanwhile, for school-age children, the individualized education program, or IEP, team must include a professional who can "interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results," the Education Department guidance said.

"We recognize that ABA therapy is just one methodology used to address the needs of children with ASD and remind states and local programs to ensure that decisions regarding services are made based on the unique needs of each individual child with a disability," Musgrove wrote.

The "Dear Colleague" letter came in response to inquiries from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and anecdotal evidence from a handful of states, Education Department officials said.

“We very much appreciate this guidance and believe that it will serve to ensure that children receive the appropriate treatment they deserve based on their individual needs,” said Judith Page, president of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Elaine Quesinberry, a spokeswoman for the Department of Education, said the letter will be posted on the agency’s website.

Attorney General Healey announces creation of disability rights advisory committee

Group Will Advise AG and Staff on Issues and Policy;
Announcement Part of ADA’s 25th Anniversary Celebration

BOSTON – Continuing her efforts to protect civil rights of all Massachusetts residents, Attorney General Maura Healey announced the formation of a Disability Rights Advisory Committee as part of the events celebrating the 25th anniversary for the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The committee will be comprised of advocates and experts that will meet on a regular basis to consult with and advise AG Healey and her staff on matters pertaining to inclusion, access, and equality for individuals with disabilities.

“My office is committed to expanding opportunities and enhancing inclusion for individuals with disabilities,” AG Healey said. “I thank the members of the committee for their willingness to work collaboratively with us. I know that our work will be more effective and better informed by direct and regular contact with the advocates who understand these issues intimately.”

The committee will include individuals with a range of backgrounds and experiences, including individuals with hearing, mobility and visual impairments. Their expertise also covers numerous areas of psycho-social disability work from developmental and cognitive impairments to mental illnesses and behavioral health. Some of the members are long-time advocates in the field with a breadth of expertise, while others represent more specialized interests such as architectural access, youth, veterans, and technology.

“I applaud the Attorney General for her long-standing commitment to disability rights,” said Christine Griffin, Executive Director of the Disability Law Center. “I am honored to be serving on this advisory committee and look forward to working closely with the Attorney General to advance the work of the Office on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families.”

“The Attorney General’s actions speak volumes about her commitment to helping individuals with disabilities,” said Charles Carr, former Commissioner of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. “I am excited by the opportunity to work with her and this advisory committee. I know that the AG can help make a real and powerful difference in the lives of so many people.”

“As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA, I want to personally thank Attorney General Maura Healey for her outstanding leadership and authentic commitment to the values and mission of the ADA,” said Chris Palames, Executive Director of Independent Living Resources. “I congratulate her wholeheartedly on the action she has taken today in forming the advisory committee to work with the Office to make real the promise of equal rights, empowerment, inclusion and economic opportunity.”

Committee members include:

- Bob Agoglia: President of the Board of Directors of the Center for Public Representation
- Ann Morrissey Andrew: Volunteer with Decoding Dyslexia and Member of Orton Gillingham Academy
- Myra Berloff: former Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability
- Charles Carr: former Commissioner of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
- Kim Charlson: President of the American Council of the Blind and Director of the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library
- Colleen Flanagan: Youth Services Coordinator for Easter Seals
- Christine Griffin: Executive Director of the Disability Law Center
- Bill Henning: Executive Director of the Boston Center for Independent Living
- Kirk Joslin: President and CEO of Easter Seals Massachusetts
- Jeffrey Keilson: Senior Vice President of Strategic Planning at Advocates

- Daniel Magoon: Executive Director of Massachusetts Fallen Heroes
- Laurie Martinelli: Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Massachusetts
- Jacqueline Martinez: Mental Health Coordinator for the Dept. of Mental Health, member of the Board of Directors for the Transformation Center
- Chris Palames: Executive Director of Independent Living Resources
- Laura Rauscher: Director of Disability Services at Smith College
- Amy Ruell: President of the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts
- Leo Sarkissian: Executive Director of The Arc of Massachusetts
- Paul Spooner: Executive Director of the Metrowest Center for Independent Living
- Laura Stout: Director of Contract Operations and President of the Empowering Abilities Employee Resource Group at Blue Cross Blue Shield Massachusetts
- Vincent Strully, Jr.: CEO and Founder of the The New England Center for Children
- Michael Weekes: President and CEO of the Providers' Council
- John Winske: Executive Director of Disability Policy Consortium
- B.J. Wood: former Commissioner of Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SOUTHEAST MASSACHUSETTS FAMILY LEADERSHIP SERIES 24

The 24th SE Family Leadership Series is about to begin! The Series focuses on supporting families and individuals to live in their communities as naturally and typically as desired. Applications from families with children or adult family members **of any age with any disability** who are **Department of Developmental Services eligible** are encouraged.

The **Family Leadership Series** has a three-fold purpose. The first is to offer information about “best practices” for people with disabilities. The second is to assist families in creating a vision for their family member and a process to achieve the vision through leadership and advocacy. The third is to develop family leaders who will advocate at the local and state level to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. The dates of the **SE Family Leadership Series 24** are: **November 13 & 14, 2015, January 22 & 23, March 11 & 12, and April 15 & 16, 2016**. Each session is two days in length. *Participants are required to attend all four sessions.*

The Series:

Initiative and Leadership – family members are given information on the background of the family support movement, leadership, advocacy and the significance of self-advocacy, how to effectively advocate for change and ways to influence funding and delivery systems.

Creative, Progressive and Innovative Ways to Provide Support – how to help our family members and our families to live quality lives. A number of presenters offer their perspectives on a broad range of topics: Inclusion in schools; supported employment; positive practices; community living and family support.

Creating A Vision – families are supported to “imagine better” and to create a vision, with and for their family members, that guides their leadership and advocacy. What advocacy is necessary to ensure the visions that are developed and what is effective advocacy?

Policy Making at the Local, State and Federal Level – family members receive information on how to develop networks with professionals and families, how to access and control resources that affect family stress and satisfaction and how to use legislative change to procure resources.

Food and overnight lodging for each family at the Holiday Inn in Mansfield is paid for by the Department of Developmental Services. Respite/child care/nursing for family members is also funded.

Families who have completed the Series have had a tremendous impact on systems change for families and individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts. Family members have been active in policy and decision making locally, regionally and statewide and some have decided to do legislative

advocacy work. Some families have been involved in community organizing and advocacy on a local level. Others have used their talents and skills to create change for their child with a disability and/or their families.

If you have questions regarding the FLS or application, please contact:

Emily Murgo Nisenbaum at The Nemasket Group, 508-999-4436, email:

emilynisenbaum@nemasketgroup.org or Dianne Huggon, 508-824-6946, email: mfofc@mfofc.org

"The Leadership Series not only educated me, it made me think differently. It was great to leave with our visions – I am convinced that there will be a better future!" FLS Graduate

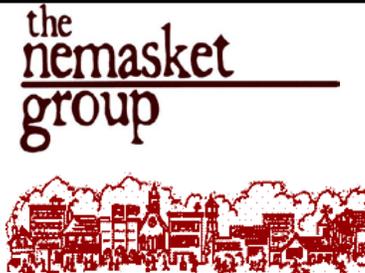
The Nemasket Group provides generous support to the SE FLS <http://nemasketgroup.org>

6



A Full Life Ahead

Information to Share



Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC)
in partnership with

Building Futures and the Family Connections Center of the Nemasket Group

presents a series of monthly workshops designed for parents and caregivers as they plan for the future of their loved one with a disability. Various workshop topics such as friendships, transition, employment, housing and financial planning are offered. The workshops and resources provided in this series will help lead to interdependent, full lives in the community for people with disabilities.

Please join us...

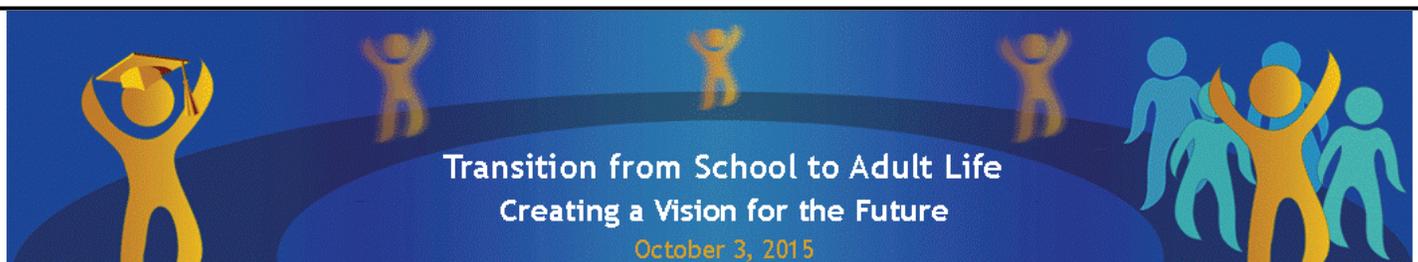
Wednesday, September 30, 2015

6 – 8 PM

The Nemasket Group

56 Bridge Street, Fairhaven MA 02710

Please RSVP to Amy Cornell @ amycornell@nemasketgroup.org or 508-999-4436



Transition from School to Adult Life

Creating a Vision for the Future

A statewide conference for families

Saturday, October 3, 2015

8:00 AM-4:00 PM

Best Western/Royal Plaza, Marlboro

TO REGISTER

<http://thearcofmass.org/transition-conference-2015/>

Registration deadline is September 22, 2015.

The Conference program will include:

- Keynote presentation by Beth Mount on Person-Centered Planning and Transition. Her groundbreaking work related to Personal Futures Planning promotes the positive futures and images of people with disabilities around the world, and demonstrates that all of us count and all of us fit somewhere
- Lunchtime Video Presentation of Successful Transitions
- 24 workshops, offering 8 in each session. Learn about the school's responsibility, benefits, programs, employment, housing and more!

- A “Technology Playground” which will be available all day, staffed by experts who will share their knowledge about iPad’s, iPod’s, tablets and appropriate APP’s for preparation for adult life and independence.
- Over 50 exhibitors offering information on programs and services

**Registration is \$75.00 per person (fee includes continental breakfast and lunch)
* scholarships available**



Conference Supporters and Sponsors

Advocates for Autism in Massachusetts (AFAM) · Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN)
 Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) · Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress (MDSC) · Mass Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)
 Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) · Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE)
 Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC) · Northeast Arc · Brockton Area Arc · HMEA · Department of Developmental Services (DDS)



Community Autism Resources

A place to start...A presence on your journey.

presents a Training Workshop for the Massachusetts Autism Omnibus Law

At the Middleborough Public Library
 102 North Main Street in Middleborough, MA
Monday, October 19, 2015
from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

This workshop will address the major components of the new Autism Omnibus Law which significantly expands services and opportunities for children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families.

The workshop will focus on the six major components of the new autism law, emphasizing practical steps and strategies to help ensure that individuals with ASD and their families can effectively access new services and opportunities.

This presentation is intended for parents and for professionals working with children on the autism spectrum who would like to have a better understanding of this new law and how it can benefit families.

- **Mass Health coverage of medically necessary treatments** for low-income children with ASD who are under 21 years old – including ABA therapies as well as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, including tablets, such as iPads.

- **Expanded eligibility criteria for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)** to include adults (22 and older) with ASD, Prader-Willi, and Smith-Magenis syndrome.
- **Creation of tax-free saving accounts (called “Achieving a Better Life Experience” or ABLE)** to help families cover anticipated disability-related expenses for individuals with autism and other physical and developmental disabilities.
- **New Autism Endorsement for special education teachers** to gain in-depth knowledge about the complexities of educating students with ASD.
- **Requirement for the Department of Mental Health and Department of Developmental Services to develop and implement a plan to provide services** to individuals who have both a mental illness and developmental disabilities.
- **Establishment of the Autism Commission as a permanent entity.**

Presenter is: Johanne Pino, Project Coordinator, Massachusetts Advocates for Children.

There is no fee for this event, however, you MUST register by visiting www.community-autism-resources.com under the Events section.

Growing up with Down Syndrome: Living a Longer, Healthier and Meaningful Life

SATURDAY, OCT. 24

On October 24, the MDSC will hold its very first adult conference in collaboration with the Massachusetts General Hospital Down Syndrome Program. Titled "**Growing up with Down Syndrome: Living a Longer, Healthier and Meaningful Life**," the conference is specifically geared for adults with Down syndrome ages 22 and up, their family members and other supporters

The day will focus on empowering adults with Down syndrome ages 22 and up along with their families and support network to plan for a healthy and meaningful future. It will be held at the MGH Simches Research Center from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Plenary Sessions Include:

- **Keynote Speakers** Jo Ann Simons, CEO Cardinal Cushing Schools, and Peter Johnson, Self Advocate
- **Medical Update:** "Keeping Adults with Down Syndrome Healthy"- Dr. Allie Schwartz, Co-Director of MGH Down Syndrome Program
- **Nutrition Workshop for Self-Advocates:** "Empowering Ourselves for a Healthy Future: How to Stay Healthy by Eating Well and Being Active" - Caitlin Woglom, RD, LDN, Nutritionist for the MGH Down Syndrome Program

Roundtable & Networking Sessions

- **Nothing About Us With Us** - For Adults with Down syndrome ages 22 and up; facilitated by members of the MDSC Self-Advocate Advisory Council; Colleen Endres, MDSC Teen and Adult Services Director; Mychelle Lee, MDSC Program Specialist
- **Been There Done That - Best Resources from Experienced Parents and Family Members** - For Parents and Family Members of Adults ages 22-39; facilitated by Ann Bersani, Parent and MDSC AIM Advisory Council Member.
- **Connect and Refresh - Best Practices and Resources for Direct Service Providers** - For Direct Service Providers; facilitated by Dr. Brian Skotko, Co-Director, MGH Down Syndrome Program; Susanna Peyton, Parent, MDSC Honorary Board Member and Operation House Call Program Advisor.
- **Growing Old Gracefully - Addressing Common Aging Concerns and Alzheimer's Issues** - For Parents and Family members of Adults ages 40 and up; facilitated by Dr. Julie Moran, geriatrician specializing in care of adults with intellectual disabilities through the Mass. Department of Developmental Services, and Dr. Jessica McCannon, MGH Down Syndrome Program Specialist.

Please Save the Date of October 24 and feel free to contact the MDSC at adultconference@mdsc.org or 781-221-0024 for more information!

10



Sibshops are workshops that provide opportunity for brothers and sisters of children with medical and developmental needs to obtain peer support and education within a highly recreational context. Our Sibshop program is for children 8-12 years of age who have a brother or sister with a disability



Wednesday, October 28th, 5-7

The Nemasket Group, 56 Bridge Street Fairhaven, MA 02719

**entrance through Front Door **

For more information and to sign up

Contact: 508-999-4436 x133

space is limited

registration is required

From the Arc of Massachusetts

Family Leave - Siblings may be eligible

The Department of Labor has clarified when siblings may be eligible to take job-protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For the first time, the Department has included siblings among those eligible for FMLA job-protected leave under certain circumstances. The Arc joined other disability advocates last year in advocating for the eligibility clarification. The Arc is pleased with this change in interpretation of the law, but will continue to seek a full legislative fix to ensure that siblings are covered under FMLA.

11

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group

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Family Connections Center

Joint Project of The Nemasket Group and
DDS (*Greater New Bedford Department of Developmental Services*)
56 Bridge Street
Fairhaven, MA 02719
Phone: 508-999-0077
Fax: 508-997-9239



Creating a network of family support
for individuals with developmental
disabilities and their families

Open Enrollment for the Autism Waiver Program Coming October 2015

Important information about Open Enrollment!!

The Autism Waiver Program will move to an Annual Open Enrollment Process beginning in October 2015. The first date to mail in applications is

Friday, October 16, 2015. The last date to mail applications is Friday, October 30, 2015.

We cannot accept forms mailed prior to or after these dates.