

# Family Connections

## THE NEMASKET GROUP WELCOMES A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- The Nemasket Group Welcomes a New Executive Director.....1

#### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

- From Inconvenient to Ordinary .....2-3

#### **INFORMATION TO SHARE**

- People With Disabilities & Serious Health Concerns.....4
- Transition Bill Signed Into Law.....5-6
- BBA Publishes 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the Parent's How-to-Guide to Children's Mental Health Services in Massachusetts.....6
- Important Message to Mass Families with Children under 9 Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.....7-8
- How Can MassMatch Help You?.....9-10
- Wrightslaw.....10

#### **AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

- Webinar: iPad 201.....11
- Bringing Brothers & Sisters Together on National Sibling Day.....12
- Turning 14.....12
- Meeting the Needs of Children with Autism.....13
- Using iPads to Achieve Educational Success for Students with Disabilities.....14
- 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders Conference.....15

Family Connections would like to welcome the new Executive Director of the Nemasket Group, Dustin Green. Dustin succeeds Louis Nisenbaum, the Nemasket Group Executive Director for 27 years, who passed away on October 25, 2011. Dustin has 20 years of experience in the human service field, specifically with agencies supporting people with developmental disabilities. For the past 5 years, Dustin has been a Senior Manager with the Nemasket Group, working closely with Mr. Nisenbaum, developing and implementing innovative community supports and programs.



As Executive Director, Dustin will oversee the daily operations of the Nemasket Group as we continue to provide quality support and services to individuals with disabilities and families. He will have responsibility for developing, administering and monitoring the delivery of services and supports provided by programs throughout the organization.

Please join us in welcoming Dustin and wishing him well as he continues the legacy created by our first Executive Director.

### **Family Connections Staff**

Sandy Kinney,  
Program Director / Associate Executive Director

Jorge Pagan,  
Family Advisor

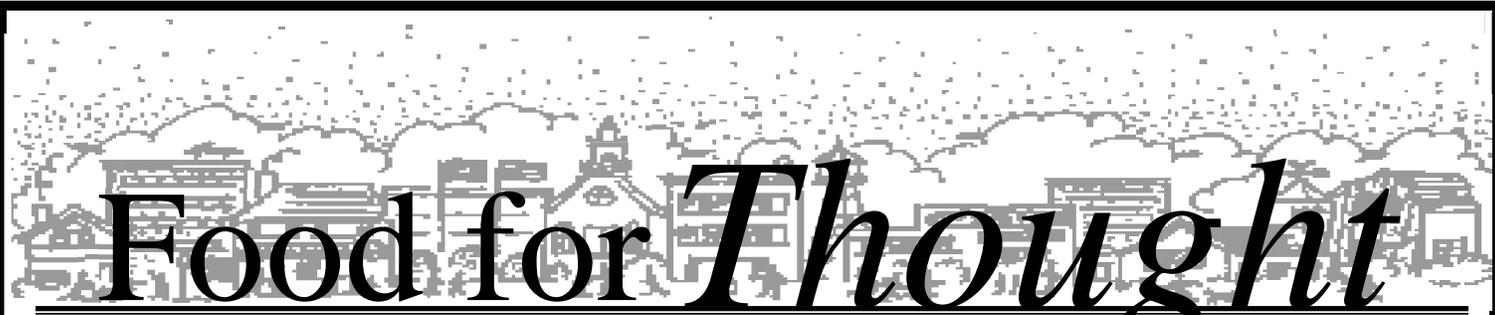
Sherry Amaral-Lopez,  
Family Advisor

Emily M. Nisenbaum,  
Sr. Associate Executive Director

Jennifer Newcomer,  
Family Advisor

Kathleen Amaral,  
Family Advisor

Dustin Green,  
Executive Director



# Food for *Thought*

## FROM INCONVENIENT TO ORDINARY

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow, [www.disabilityisnatural.com](http://www.disabilityisnatural.com)

On a regular basis, we face change. We're constantly having to adjust to new technology, new rules, or new situations. And the "new" – even though it may be good and/or helpful - may often be inconvenient initially, but it soon becomes ordinary.

Take cell phones, for example. Having the ability to communicate while on the go is good; having to figure out how to use the darn thing correctly (both the technology and the rules for courteous use) can be inconvenient. I just want to make calls; I don't want to learn about all the "options." But I must take the time and make the effort in order to use the phone correctly. Once I've mastered this inconvenience, I'm familiar with the technology and it becomes ordinary.

The same can be true about the inclusion of people with disabilities in schools, jobs, and ordinary community activities. The *idea* of a child being included in a general ed classroom, an adult becoming employed in a real job, or a child/adult participating in a community activity is often rejected by the Gatekeepers, and a multitude of reasons for the rejection may be offered. In many cases, the rejection is based on the belief that it would create an *inconvenience*.

For example, it might be considered inconvenient to modify the curriculum to meet a student's needs, to provide accommodations for a job, or to make alterations to the community activity so that all can participate. But like other perceived inconveniences, once the "new" occurs on a regular basis, it becomes familiar and ordinary.

We shouldn't be surprised when inclusion isn't easily achieved. After all, it's a new and unknown experience for many people – whether they're public school teachers, employers, church members, or anyone else. Many, if not most, new experiences are met with hesitation, trepidation, and

maybe even rejection. Furthermore, what did you know about children or adults with disabilities before you became personally involved with disability issues? I knew nothing; I could have been a teacher or a Scout leader or an employer who rejected the notion of including a person with a disability within my sphere of influence or responsibility.

When my son, Benjamin, was five, we signed him up for T-ball through our local Parks and Recreation department. I expected some resistance. I felt sure the coach had no experience with a child who used a wheelchair. When the coach called our home to confirm Benjamin's registration, he said – in words that seemed to have a hard time coming out of his mouth – "We've never done anything like this before." I'm sure he couldn't even imagine what this would look like – much less feel confident about doing it – and he probably felt my son's participation would throw a kink (be an inconvenience) in his usual methods of coaching. Anticipating his resistance, I was prepared to defend my son's right to participate, and to quote chapter and verse from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But common sense came to my aid, and instead of reacting defensively, I responded in a friendly manner with, "We've never done this either – we'll lean together!" Those words sent a positive message of partnership, instead of an adversarial message about "rights" or discrimination.

Once we learned – together – how to ensure Benj could play T-ball with the help of easily-achieved accommodations, the perceived inconvenience was quickly replaced by an ordinary routine. Benj's coach, along with the other coaches, players, parents, and spectators, learned how easy it was to include a child who used a wheelchair. The lessons learned could later be applied to others with disabilities or differences.

...Continued on page 3

...Continued from page 2

The only way to make inclusion happen is to do it! There's really no "getting ready" for anyone! Not only a T-ball coach, an employer, a school teacher; nor for a child or adult with a disability. Everyone is ready, right now. Just do it! Only then will the "inconvenient" become the "ordinary."

It's kind of like riding a bicycle. The first time you perched precariously on the seat of a bicycle, no one helped you "get ready." Your parents didn't sit you down and teach you about the dynamics of movement or balance or steering, and they probably didn't even tell you how to do it. They helped you sit on the seat, told you where to place your feet and hands, and off you went. Like many other things in life, you learned by doing. Inclusion – whether in school, at a job, or in a community activity – is the same: we learn by doing.

Becoming successful in riding a bicycle began with a positive belief. Even if you didn't believe you could ride your bike, your parents did! So it is with inclusion in any setting. Inclusion is, first and foremost, a state of mind. If you believe a person with a disability will be, can be, should be included, it will happen. Having a vision of inclusion will lead to the reality of inclusion.

This doesn't mean it will always be easy (but it's often easier than you think). I'm always shocked when, during a presentation on inclusion, someone in the audience denounces the idea with anger or sarcasm, "Well, you make it sound so easy!" I don't understand that attitude. Are we justified in not doing something just because it may be hard? Learning to ride a bicycle may have been difficult, but we did it anyway! The same is true for countless situations. Shouldn't we put the same effort into ensuring a person with a disability is able to live a bountiful and ordinary life as a fully-participating, included citizen?

The greatest barrier to inclusion is not a person's disability, but societal attitudes and perceptions (including our own, in many cases). The solution is to "present" inclusion as an ordinary occurrence, instead of a right, an entitlement, or even a favor. Everyone is born included! Inclusion is the natural state of being, while segregation is the

unnatural, artificial state! Inclusion is a moral and ethical issue – and goes way beyond a legal entitlement. And inclusion will more readily be achieved when a person is presented as an ordinary human being – not as a "special" person and not even as "a person with a disability!"

When we signed Benjamin up for T-ball, we didn't sign him up as a "child with a disability" or a "special needs child." (Gag!) We signed him up as "Benjamin, a five-year-old kindergartner." His classmates were excited about playing team sports; Benjamin wanted to do what his friends were doing. We were determined to ensure our son lived an ordinary life; his disability is irrelevant in the big picture! Only after Benj was signed up did we talk to the coach about what accommodations and supports were needed for Benj and his coach to be successful.

There's no doubt that one day – and I hope it's within my lifetime – inclusion in all areas of society will be achieved. Inclusion will become the rule (ordinary), instead of the exception (inconvenient). This will not occur as a result of legislation (we already have laws that prohibit discrimination based on disability – but they're not always followed).

Also, inclusion will not occur as a result of widespread training of educators, employers, or others. I've met educators who have attended numerous inclusive conferences, yet they still embrace segregation. This doesn't mean training is of no value, it just means we're fooling ourselves if we think inclusion can be achieved only when people are trained in its practice.

In pockets here and there, inclusion is successfully implemented because parents, educators, employment specialists, employers, and others are making the conscious decision to do it (even when they're not sure exactly how to make it happen). They do whatever it takes to ensure success, sometimes taking two steps forward and one step back. But they never give up, even when the going gets tough. These brave souls practice determination and positive attitude as they fine-tune the process of making accommodations, meeting an individual's needs, and more. They learn by doing. In the process, the inclusion of children and adults with disabilities evolves from an inconvenient to an ordinary occurrence. I'm ready for inclusion to become a reality, aren't you?

**To believe in something not yet proved and to underwrite it with our lives: it is the only way we can leave the future open.**

*Lillian Smith*

# Information to Share

## People with Disabilities & Serious Health Concerns

### THE TOP FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The Affordable Care Act – the health care law – gives people with disabilities the security they need and important new benefits. Signed into law in March of 2010, the law contains significant benefits for people who are living with disabilities, expands access to private insurance and to public programs like Medicaid, and gets rid of the worst insurance practices by putting patients first.

Here are five ways the health care law helps you:

1. No discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions. Insurers can no longer deny coverage to children because of a pre-existing condition and starting in 2014, discriminating against anyone with a pre-existing condition will be illegal. Insurance companies will also not be allowed to charge higher premiums for people with disabilities or other pre-existing conditions.

2. Insurers can't deny, cap, or limit your coverage. In the past, some people with chronic

illnesses ran out of insurance coverage because their health care expenses reached a dollar limit imposed by their insurance company. Under the health care law, insurers can no longer impose lifetime dollar limits on essential health benefits, and annual limits are being phased out by 2014.

3. Insurance coverage options are expanded. If you have a medical condition, you may be able to get insurance through a Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan (PCIP) in your State. To qualify, you need to have been uninsured for at



least 6 months and have otherwise been denied private coverage because of your medical condition. Most young adults up to the age of 26 can stay on their parent's family plan. Starting in 2014, low-income Americans will be eligible for *Medicaid* and middle-income people can be

eligible for tax credits to help pay for private coverage.

4. There are new options for long term supports and services. The Affordable Care Act builds on successful models and provides incentives to States and expands efforts to offer people with disabilities more opportunities to receive the long term supports and services they require in their communities, through programs such as Money Follows the Person and Community First Choice Option.

5. Insurance Companies are held accountable. If insurance companies don't spend at least 80 percent of your premium dollar on medical care and quality improvements rather than advertising and bonuses for executives, they will have to provide you a rebate. And, starting September 1, 2011, in every State and for the first time ever, insurance companies are required to publicly justify proposed rate increases of more than 10 percent.

# TRANSITION BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

---

---

BOSTON – On March 9, the Transition Bill was signed in law by Governor Deval Patrick.

Officially known as "An Act to Promote the Successful Transition of Students with Disabilities to Post-Secondary Education, Employment and Independent Living," the legislation will ensure that special educators have the necessary training to evaluate students earlier, focus on their abilities and help get them to that next phase in their lives. This victory is an indication that lawmakers understand the importance of transition specialists in the schools and recognize that older students with disabilities need special education transition planning and services to adequately prepare for life after high school.



Massachusetts students with special needs will be better prepared to get a job, go to college and live on their own under this law.

"Transitioning from high school to the real world can be a very stressful time for anyone," Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth). "Students with disabilities have additional challenges to overcome, and it is important that we have trained specialists developing the plan and services they need for success. This bill makes sure special educators have the necessary training to start evaluating students earlier, focus on their abilities and help get them to that next phase in their lives."

"Unfortunately, many students with disabilities are not receiving the transition planning services needed to help them further their education, access employment opportunities, and live independently," said Senator Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett), lead sponsor of the bill. "This bill will begin to remedy this problem by empowering special education teachers to receive specialized training to provide these critical services. Young people with disabilities should be afforded every opportunity to reach their full potential as they leave of the school system and begin the next chapter of their lives. I would also like to thank former Senator Steven Tolman and Senate President Therese Murray for all their hard work on this bill."

Once a student with special needs turns 22 in Massachusetts, the school system is no longer responsible for providing services, making proper transition planning essential. The bill will directly benefit students with special needs between the ages of 14 and 22 when transition preparations become most important. Currently, because of lacking state standards, special educators through no fault of their own can be unprepared to provide transition services.

Under the law, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will

*...Continued on page 6*

...Continued from page 5

establish an endorsement program by which licensed special education teachers and rehabilitation counselors can receive the additional training and field experience necessary to qualify as transition coordinators.

Educators and advocates believe that higher standards and a new focus on transition planning will help alleviate some discouraging trends.

For example, Massachusetts Advocates for Children reports that the national unemployment rate for adults with special needs is approximately 70 percent. In Massachusetts, the dropout rate for students with special needs is 50 percent higher than typical students (5 percent compared to 2.5 percent). Additionally, they are less likely to graduate from high school and "three times more likely to live in poverty as adults."

According to recent testimony on the bill from Debra Hart, director of education and transition for the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston: "Current research supports that the best possible employment outcome for people with disabilities is integrated paid employment; meaning competitive employment – a real job earning a living wage in the community. Yet of the 4,000 students ages 16-26 enrolled in the Massachusetts vocational rehabilitation system, only 25 percent had an integrated employment outcome."

Additional testimony from colleges and universities indicated an ability and willingness to offer transition services coursework. Contingent upon the bill's passage, UMass Boston is ready to make use of a \$1.25 million federal grant to develop courses for special educators to earn a transition services endorsement.



---

## **The Boston Bar Association (BBA) has published the 3rd edition of the Parents' How-To Guide to Children's Mental Health Services in Massachusetts (Guide).**

The Guide is designed to help parents in Massachusetts find the child mental health resources and services their children need. This newest edition expands the Guide to address developmental and autism spectrum disorders, broadens the discussion of school-based and special education programs, and adds many new references to the Resource List at the end of the Guide. This edition also updates the Guide to incorporate recent developments which include new coordination of care initiatives, such as Unified Planning Teams, that bridge programs and Departments within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), and the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, which establishes a new coordinated system of community-based mental health services.

Use this link below to view or download this publication.

[http://www.bostonbar.org/docs/default-document-library/bbaGUIDE\\_2011update\\_2.pdf](http://www.bostonbar.org/docs/default-document-library/bbaGUIDE_2011update_2.pdf)



## An Important Message to Massachusetts Families with Children under Age 9 Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

The Autism Division of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) runs a Autism Waiver Program that provides one-to-one interventions to help children with autism who exhibit severe behavior, social and communication problems through a service called **Expanded Habilitation, Education** (intensive in-home services and supports, such as Applied Behavioral Analysis, Floor Time and Communication models). This service occurs in the child's home or other natural settings under the supervision of trained clinical staff. The waiver will also provide related support services such as community integration activities and respite.

The Autism Waiver serves children up until their 9<sup>th</sup> birthday, with an autism spectrum disorder who meet the eligibility criteria for the Waiver Program. Shortly, the Autism Division will offer an opportunity to apply for the waiver through an open application period. The open enrollment period **begins on April 2, 2012 and ends April 14, 2012**

The Autism Waiver allows children to receive Expanded Habilitation, Education, (intensive in-home Services and supports, such as ABA and Floor Time) for a total of 3 years. At the conclusion of the 3 years of the intensive in-home services, a child may access ongoing Supplemental Services (respite and goods and services, etc.) that meet the child's needs and help with the transition out of the intensive Autism Waiver Program—until the child's 9<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Please contact your local Autism Support Center:**

**Community Autism Resources (CAR)  
33 James Reynolds Rd, Unit C, Swansea, MA 02777  
#508-379-0371: Serving Southeastern, MA**

**Eligibility:** the following requirements are necessary for participation in this program:

1. The child must have a **confirmed diagnosis** of an Autism Spectrum Disorder, which includes Autistic Disorder, PDD-NOS, Rhetts's Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Asperger Syndrome subject to verification by the Department of Developmental Services.
2. The child has not yet reached his/her 9th birthday. Children birth through age 8 may participate.
3. The child is a resident of Massachusetts.
4. The child meets the level of care required for services in an Intermediate Care Facility for persons with an Intellectual Disability (ICF/ID) as assessed by DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES.
5. The family chooses to have the child receive services in the home and community.
6. The child must be able to be safely served in the community.
7. The child must have a legally responsible representative able to direct the services and supports of the Waiver.
8. The child must be found by the MassHealth agency to be eligible for MassHealth Standard coverage, based on family income. For families who have not yet applied for MassHealth, this must be done at the time of the filing of the Waiver Program Eligibility Request Form.

*...Continued on page 8*

...Continued from page 7

Below is the maximum Income Guidelines for MassHealth Standard at 150% of Federal Poverty Level. In order to participate in the Autism Program, your family income must fall below the levels on the list\*:

Family Size	Monthly	Yearly
1	\$1,354	\$13,248
2	\$1,822	\$21,864
3	\$2,289	\$27,468
4	\$2,757	\$33,084
5	\$3,224	\$38,688
6	\$3,692	\$44,304

\*If your child is under age one or has a specialized medical condition such as blindness, deafness or a debilitating chronic medical illness the standards are different from those listed above; please contact the Autism Division for clarification in these cases.

### How to Participate in the Eligibility Process:

#### 1. Get a copy of the Autism Program Request Form

- a. Please contact your local Autism Support Center (listed on previous page) to request the Application Form.
- b. The Autism Support Centers are available to help you complete Application Form.
- c. The Autism Division will post all forms on the DDS website:
  - [www.mass.gov/DDS](http://www.mass.gov/DDS) under 'Autism Spectrum Services'

#### 2. Complete the Autism Program Application Form

To complete this Form you will need:

- a. Your child's date of birth
- b. Your child's social security number
- c. Your child's MassHealth ID number

#### 3. Submit the Autism Program Eligibility Application Form

- All Applications Must have a Postmark or Date Stamp between the open enrollment period only.
- The Autism Division will discard forms outside of this designated time period.
- Please complete the form in Pen and Print Clearly.
- Please Sign the Form in Pen.
- ONLY ONE APPLICATION PER CHILD—The Autism Division will discard multiple forms
- Please Mail Form (The Autism Division is not accepting hand delivered forms) to:

**AUTISM DIVISION of DDS**

**Att. Autism Program Application Form**

**500 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02118**

It is a priority of the Autism Division of DDS to ensure that the process for requesting eligibility for the Autism Waiver Program is fully accessible to families and children with autism who are from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

## How Can MassMATCH Help You?

Now more than ever technology is helping to transform lives. MassMATCH is dedicated to linking individuals with disabilities with the assistive technology (AT) that can help them to better live, learn, work and play. Whether you are an individual with a disability, a family member, advocate, educator, therapist, employer, or another professional, MassMATCH has programs and resources to help you learn about and gain access to AT.



Massachusetts residents enjoy the day on a tandem tricycle.

### o AT Regional Centers (ATRCs)



The ATRCs are the cornerstone of MassMATCH services. MassMATCH partners with Easter Seals in Boston, and United Cerebral Palsy in Pittsfield to provide two ATRCs serving the eastern and western regions of Massachusetts. The Centers provide an opportunity to see, touch, and try assistive technology devices and are funded to demonstrate

a range of devices for use by children, adults and seniors. Everything from magnifiers and assistive listening equipment to alternative keyboards, smart pens, iPads and apps are on hand. Loaner equipment is available for up to 4 weeks so that you (or your client) can "try before you buy" or fill a short-term need. If you decide to purchase, ATRC staff can help you navigate funding sources and providers. Educators, employers, therapists, as well as family members and AT users are welcome at AT Regional Centers.

### o AT Loan \$ Program



The Massachusetts AT Loan Program gives individuals with disabilities and their families access to low-interest cash loans to buy the assistive technology devices they need or want.

Operated by Easter Seals (in partnership with the Sovereign Bank), this alternative financing program often provides loans to persons on limited incomes and/or with less than perfect credit histories. If you are a person with a disability, elder, or family member, are tired of waiting lists, have been denied by another funding source, or are just looking to afford a device or AT service, the AT Loan Program may be for you. Learn more at [MassATloan.org](http://MassATloan.org).



Ergoquest work station.

...Continued from page 9

## ○ Long-Term Device Loan Program

Another great resource is the Long-Term Device Loan Program. Easter Seals partners with MassMATCH to provide income-qualified applicants with equipment valued at under \$500 for as long as they need it. Top priority is given to individuals who need AT for health and safety reasons, or for their primary means of communication, or for living at home after being discharged from a skilled nursing facility. Learn more about the Long-Term Device Loan Program at [MassATloan.org](http://MassATloan.org).

## ○ Get AT Stuff



Looking for an affordable power or manual wheelchair? A specialized magnifier? A used accessible van? Try the Assistive Technology Exchange in New England! This is the online "Craig's List" of assistive technology and durable medical equipment. Here you can browse equipment

available among the six New England states, post a device you have to sell, loan, or give away, even post a "device wanted" ad. Learn more at [GetATStuff.org](http://GetATStuff.org).

## ○ AT Funding Guide

Everything you ever wanted to know about how AT and Durable Medical Equipment is (and isn't) funded in Massachusetts. The online [AT Funding Guide](#) covers public and private sources, from MassHealth to the Lion's Club. Advice is given for appealing denials and who to go to for assistance. Also check out the [AT Advocacy Guide](#) for finding expert help and advice with your specific funding issues.

## ○ Ask the Expert



Have a question about AT, AT services, or funding? You can also contact MassMATCH for help (or a targeted referral) through the MassMATCH Web page.

# [www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)

Parents, educators, advocates, and attorneys come to Wrightslaw for accurate, reliable information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities.



# Available *Resources*

**Webinar: iPad 201  
Accessories, Adaptations, and Awesome App Resources**



## **Registration is still available for iPad 201 Accessories, Adaptations, and Awesome App Resources**

For iPad users with disabilities, supportive accessories, adaptations, and resources exist in abundance and are easy to incorporate into everyday use. Using a combination of short video clips, photos, and an extensive resource list, this 90-minute live webinar will help individuals select the appropriate apps, accessories, and adaptations. This session will also demonstrate how to make an iPad stand, how to adapt a stylus, several ways to mount an iPad, and ways to protect an iPad. Accessory examples will focus on specific functional limitations, including supports for low vision, hearing, grip, and communication issues. Finally, this webinar will discuss creative uses for the iPad's accessibility features and built-in apps.

**Date: April 3, 2012**

**Time: 3:30 EDT  
(12:30 PDT)**

**Duration: 90 minutes**

**Location: Online**

**Registration Fee: \$59**

**Webinar Instructor: Therese Willkomm**

Questions? E-mail @ [events.iod@unh.edu](mailto:events.iod@unh.edu)  
or Call 603-228-2084



# Bringing Brothers and Sisters Together on National Sibling Day



Are you a sibling to an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)? Did you know there's a day set aside just for you? The Arc will celebrate National Sibling Day on April 10 with a special opportunity for siblings to connect and learn online.

Join [The Arc](#) and the [Sibling Leadership Network](#) at noon Eastern Time for "[Getting Started: How to Bring Brothers and Sisters of People with Disabilities Together](#)," a FREE Webinar overview of the paths to successful networking. How do siblings learn about each other and meet? What issues draw people together? And, how do groups like [The Arc's National Sibling Council](#) maintain momentum to keep siblings engaged and active? Find out more from leaders and siblings involved in Chapters of The Arc across the country.

Mark your calendar to celebrate National Sibling Day and register now for:

## Getting Started: How to Bring Brothers and Sisters of People with Disabilities Together

April 10, 2012, Noon EDT

<https://cc.readytalk.com/r/prg1ncxn3no7>

Registration is FREE

---

---

# TURNING 14

---

Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 pm

**The Nemasket Group  
56 Bridge Street  
Fairhaven, MA 02719**

Presented by Melinda Perry

Hosted by Sherry Amaral-Lopez

This workshop addresses effective use of the IEP and the Massachusetts Transition Planning Form for students who are ages 14 – 22. Individualized, person centered planning of curriculum and supports throughout high school leads to better post high school outcomes and opportunities in education, training, and/or employment for students with disabilities. Discussion includes age of majority, self determination and self advocacy, life skill development and preparing students to pursue as independent an adult life as possible.

# What Professionals Need to Know About Special Education Law and Writing Evaluation Reports



## “Meeting the Needs of Children with Autism”

### Hosted by Community Autism Resources

This workshop provides an overview of specific legal requirements pertaining to the unique learning needs of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). With an emphasis on the requirement that children with ASD receive educational opportunities which reflect competency and potential, this workshop will address current trends, legal standards, evaluation rights and procedures, writing evaluation reports, some discussion of court cases and special education service options for children with ASD.

This presentation is intended for professionals working with children on the autism spectrum who would like to have a better understanding of:

- The legal obligations of a school district in educating a child with ASD.
- The role of the service provider in providing educational opportunities which reflect competency and potential of children with ASD.
- The need for intensive, coordinated services and programs often required for students with ASD to make effective progress.

**Presenter:** Leslie Hughes, Autism Public Education Specialist, Autism Special Education Legal Support Center, Massachusetts Advocates for Children

**Date:** Tuesday, April 24, 2012

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. – Noon

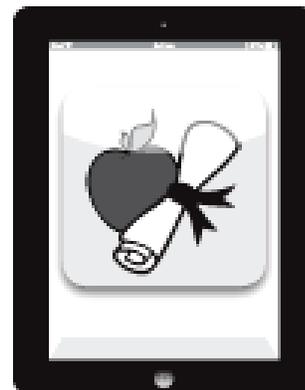
**Location:** The Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, 50 Christys Drive, Brockton, MA

There is no cost for this presentation, but you must register via the website  
[www.community-autism-resources.com](http://www.community-autism-resources.com).

# You're Invited

You are invited to attend **Using iPads to Achieve Educational Success for Students with Disabilities**, a workshop presented by the UNH Institute on Disability Wednesday, May 2, 2012, 9am to 3pm, at the Crappone Conference Center in Concord, NH.

**Date: Wednesday, May 2, 2012**  
**Time: 9am to 3pm**  
**Location: Crappone Conference Center**  
**Concord, NH**  
**Registration Fee: \$120**



To Register: <http://www.iod.unh.edu/>

This hands-on interactive workshop will explore how to successfully use an iPad to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Participants will explore numerous apps with benefits for a wide range of learners, including apps for reading, writing, math, and science; apps for communication, memory, prompting, and organization; apps for students with hearing or visual disabilities; and apps for conducting assessments. In addition, this workshop will discuss and demonstrate various iPad accessories, switches, keyboards, and mounting solutions to accommodate students who experience physical disabilities.

Educators, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, transition coordinators, and related service providers are encouraged to attend.

***Participants are encouraged to bring their own iPads.*** We have a limited number available for loan on a first-come, first-served basis – please call 603-228-2084 if you require the use of a loaner iPad.

## **About the instructor:**

Therese Willkomm, Ph.D., ATP directs the New Hampshire State Assistive Technology Program (ATinNH) at the Institute on Disability, is a clinical assistant professor in the University of New Hampshire Department of Occupational Therapy, coordinates the graduate certificate in assistive technology disability studies minor. Known internationally as “The MacGyver of Assistive Technology” and for her work in rural rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities, she has been providing and managing AT services for over 28 years and has authored 22 publications.



# 6th Annual Focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders Conference

**Unlocking Possibility Through Assistive Technology - May 4-5, 2012**

---

On May 4th and 5th, well-known autism experts join Lesley University's Graduate Autism Intervention Program to support Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) Autism Legal Support Center. One-hundred percent of the proceeds from these events will directly support the work of MAC, a private non-profit organization dedicated to being an independent and effective voice for children who face significant barriers to equal educational and life opportunities. Since its inception in 2002, the Center has become a vital force within the autism community in Massachusetts, providing training, legal assistance, advocacy, and services to thousands of parents and professionals to ensure that children with autism overcome lowered expectations and receive equal educational opportunities.

## Conference Highlights

### **Friday, May 4, 2012 | 7:00 - 9:30 pm: Author Reading & Signing**

Join us for a wine and cheese reception as local author, Susan Senator, reads from her latest novel, *Dirt: a story of gardening, mothering and other messy things*. Susan is the author of three books on autism.

### **Saturday, May 5, 2012 | 8:00 am - 5:00 pm: Autism & Assistive Technology**

Dr. Rosalind Picard, MIT Media Lab; Marie Duggan, Technology for Autism Now; Russell Ewell, Hope Technology School/Quicktalk; Dr. Brenda Matthis, Lesley University; Russell Ewell, CEO, Digital Scribbler (via Skype); and Jennifer Leighton, Communication and Technology Lab, Spaulding Rehabilitation at the Lurie Center, join us for a day of learning and discussion. PDPs available.

### **May 4-5: Artism: Art & Autism**

Artism: Art & Autism, an art show featuring the art of people with autism, will be jointly curated by Dr. Robert Shreefter of Lesley University's Creative Arts in Learning Program and Elizabeth Stringer Keefe, faculty in the Graduate School of Education Special Education Program. Art will be displayed during the month of April for Autism Awareness month and for sale during the conference events this year, with all proceeds benefitting MAC.

**Interested? For more information, <http://nationalcenter.lesley.edu/events>**

# Guardianship & Health Care Proxy Workshop

Attorney Michael Lahti  
Lahti & Lahti Law Offices  
Specialist in Estate Planning and Elder Law

**Thursday, May 17, 2012**  
**3:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

Important topics to be discussed will include:

- What is a Health Care Proxy?
- What is Power of Attorney?
- What is Legal Guardianship?
- What is the difference between a Health Care Proxy and Power of Attorney, or Legal Guardianship?
- How to institute a Health Care Proxy.

There is no cost for this training.  
To register, please call Lea Morais at 508-999-4436 x 110

Sponsored by the New Bedford Area Training Committee

---

the  
**nemasket**  
group

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
FAIRHAVEN, MA  
PERMIT NO. 51

## **Family Connections**

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



United Way  
of Greater New Bedford

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