

# Family Connections Center

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## Budget Moves On Salary Bonus, Family Support and Autism Increases Included

**Most of Governor’s Disability Recommendations Remain Intact**

### House Careful to Stay within it’s Revenue Projections

The House Ways and Means budget for Disability programs is leaving the House in pretty much the same form that it was referred to the floor by the Committee on April 10th. One major improvement was the designation of \$7.5 million for a one time salary bonus for direct support human service workers earning less than \$40,000. Rep. David Linsky and Rep. Ruth Balser led this effort with the public support and endorsement of many of their House colleagues.

On that day, **HWM Chairman Brian Dempsey** released a \$33.8 Billion budget that contained some welcome news for disability advocates including:

- **DDS Respite and Family support increased by \$2 million** over the Governor's request coming in at \$51,504,298 to help more families seeking in home therapies to avoid more costly out of home placements.

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- **Autism Services increased by \$1 million** to address the tremendous cry for services in the Commonwealth.
- **DDS Day and Employment funded at the Governor's request** of \$161,873,253
- **Turning 22 at \$6 million**
- **DDS Residential funded at a \$38 million increase to address Chapter 257 roll out.**

**ADDP/The Arc/MFOFC** were pleased that the HWM budget advocated for additional funding amendments noting continued Family Support, Respite, and Turning 22 needs; however, House Members were unable to provide more than what the HWM Committee authorized earlier in the month. **ADDP, the Arc and MFOFC, are grateful to the legislators including Reps. Garballey, Brodeur, Garlick, Benson and others who stepped forward to advocate on behalf of disability interests.**

Of particular concern to ADDP Members is the status of the Chapter 257 Residential Appropriation. The HWM Committee reduced by \$14 million the already underfunded amount recommended by the Governor. The Governor has recommended late rollout of the obligated rate set by the state's own rate setting authority. In order to comply with the rate and the Chapter 257 law, enacted by the Legislature in 2008 and amended in 2009, the Governor will likely need to request supplemental funding in after the completion of the regular legislative session. A supplemental budget is a frequent occurrence giving the Governor and the Legislature the opportunity present timely projections of revenue needed to meet the Commonwealth's legal obligations.

After formal adoption of the entire budget by the House, the Budget will move to the Senate for intensive review by **Senate Budget Chief Senator Steve Brewer** and his Ways & Means colleagues.

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## Feds Take Stand Against Sheltered Workshops

By Shaun Heasley @ Disability Scoop

*The settlement of this case will have implications for all other states not providing supported employment services.*

The Obama administration is looking to become directly involved in a class-action lawsuit that has people with developmental disabilities seeking greater employment opportunities. The U.S. Department of Justice filed a motion last week to intervene in a federal lawsuit brought on behalf of thousands of people with developmental disabilities against the state of Oregon. The individuals behind the case allege that the state is violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by not providing supported employment services, which help people with disabilities work in the community.

The first-of-its-kind suit is being closely watched by advocates as the disability community remains split on the appropriate role of sheltered workshops and subminimum wage. Plaintiffs in the case argue that they have requested assistance to be able to obtain competitive employment for years with no luck and are trapped in a system where sheltered employment — typically paying less than minimum wage — is their only option.

Now, in a move that could add weight to the proceedings, the Justice Department wants to become a plaintiff as well. In a filing with the court, government attorneys allege that “the state of Oregon discriminates against individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities by unnecessarily segregating them in sheltered workshops and by placing them at risk of such segregation.”

The action comes nearly a year after the Justice Department filed a statement of interest with the court arguing that limiting people with disabilities to employment in sheltered workshops is no different than restricting them to live in institutions. Attorneys for the federal government say they tried unsuccessfully to work with the state of Oregon to resolve the complaint before asking to intervene.

# Available *Resources*

## Housing Connections

MA Families for Change is organizing a group for people who are exploring housing options of the son/daughter with a disability.



Housing Connections is a program offered by Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change. The purpose of Housing Connections is to help families who would like to find or create a home for their loved ones communicate with other families with similar interests. A Questionnaire and an Email Group List (listserv) have been created to help accomplish this purpose and is to be used for this purpose only. The Housing Connections group is for Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change statewide organization members. To become a MFOFC member, please go to: <http://www.mfofc.org/survey/index.html>

## **FREE SUMMER VACATION FROM DREAM DAY ON CAPE COD**

A reminder to families that **Dream Day on Cape Cod** offers an opportunity of a lifetime! Families of children with complex or life-limiting medical conditions are welcome to attend a free (yes, FREE) 5-day stay at this wonderful camp. The camp offers accommodations for 8 families in each of 6 weeks. The first session begins on Sunday, June 30; the last, Sunday, August 4.

If your family would enjoy a summer vacation (whose wouldn't?), please visit the website below to learn more and start the application process. Don't delay, as weeks are quickly being booked.

Dream Day also offers a winter holiday event in December; details can also be found on this website.

<http://www.dreamdayoncapecod.org/>



# Information to *Share*

## Parents Supporting Parents



May 8, 2013  
10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.



Parent/Caregiver "Walk in the Park" Support Group

Join us here at The Nemasket Group (weather permitting) for the beginning of our spring/summer Parent Support Group series. Walking is a great way to get your mind off of distressing concerns and daily pressures. Come join us for a relaxing stroll around Cushman Park.

Our goal is to create a safe & welcoming place for parents/caregivers of individuals with special needs to:

- Provide emotional and practical support
- Offer encouragement
- Reduce stress
- Develop friendships



Water bottles will be provided, please wear comfortable shoes

"You alone can do it-but you can't do it alone"

# Save the Date

EASTER SEALS MASSACHUSETTS  
PRESENTS  
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY  
CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION  
SPONSORED BY MassMATCH

June 3, 2013  
DCU Center  
Worcester, MA

For further information please contact:  
Rufina Kennedy  
508-751-6312 or [rkennedy@eastersealsma.org](mailto:rkennedy@eastersealsma.org)  
[www.EasterSealsMA.org](http://www.EasterSealsMA.org)

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

# Save The Date

Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC)  
in partnership with Family Connections & Building Futures

A Full Life Ahead is a series of monthly workshops for parents and guardians of young adults with a disability. The series is focused on transition, employment, housing and other topics that will help to give them interdependent full lives in their community.

Please join us for the first workshop of the Series...

June 11, 2013

6-8:00 PM

The Nemasket Group  
56 Bridge St.  
Fairhaven, MA 02719

**A Full Life Ahead**



*“Planning for Life after Special Education in Massachusetts”*

**Do NOT miss  
out on these  
workshops!**

## **Upcoming Workshops!**

### **1. Considering Assistive Technology in the IEP (May 16th 6:00 – 7:30 PM)**

This training will review the difference between considering assistive technology, as mandated by law, and an assistive technology evaluation. The SETT Framework for considering assistive technology will be discussed. We will look at interventions teams can put in place for students with high incidence disabilities which may prevent the need for costly assistive technology evaluations.

### **2. NEW! Introduction to Dragon Naturally Speaking (May 22 6:00 – 7:30 PM)**

This presentation will discuss how Dragon NaturallySpeaking speech-to-text software can help you become more independent at home or at work. Learn how speech recognition not only assists with dictation, but also assists with controlling every aspect of your computer.

Tom Vain, a Nuance Communications, Inc. Sales Engineer for Dragon desktop products will be your presenter. Tom comes from a highly technical background with Dragon NaturallySpeaking and many years of technical support background for Nuance. He also has extensive support experience with Nuance's Dragon Dictate, which is a Mac-based application that uses the Dragon SDK/engine to dictate and control the Mac platform.

**Registration Deadline:** 1 week prior to each session.

To register, please contact Jean K. Des Roches at 508-992-3128 x516 or  
[JDesroches@eastersealsma.org](mailto:JDesroches@eastersealsma.org)

All activities are held at the Easter Seals Technology and Training Center, 256 Union Street, New Bedford, MA and are free and open to the public, thanks to Easter Seals MA and the support of the City of New Bedford Community Development Block Grant.



# National Sibling Day

In celebration of National Sibling Day, which was April 10th, Family Connections Centers SIBSHOP program took a trip to JF&CS in Waltham to participate in a demonstration sibshop led by Don Meyer, director of the sibling support project. The demonstration sibshop took place on April 5<sup>th</sup>, the second of a two day conference about siblings.



For more information about Sibling Support Project visit: <http://www.siblingsupport.org/>

For Massachusetts Sibling Support Network visit: <http://www.masiblingsupport.org>

If you are interested in our Sibshops program please contact Kathleen Amaral at 508-999-4436 x133

**A booklet just released from the  
National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS):**

**Aging and Down Syndrome: A Health and Wellbeing Guidebook.**  
It's a very comprehensive resource and is rather one-of-a-kind in  
terms of resources available in the lay press. Here's the link to  
the website that has the press release.

**<http://www.ndss.org/About-NDSS/Newsroom/Recent-News/Aging-and-Down-Syndrome-A-Health-Well-Being-Guidebook/>**

It's viewable online and hard copies are available free of charge.  
There is also a webinar for NDSS on this topic, so this may also be  
of interest for additional learning:

**[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yQc\\_7cjTDA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yQc_7cjTDA)**



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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



United Way  
of Greater New Bedford

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