

Family Connections Center

What is the Family Connections Center?

Family Connections Center is a project of **The Nemasket Group** and the Greater New Bedford Area Family Support Center for the Department of Developmental Services.

The Family Connections Center is designed to listen and respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities, young and old, to have equal opportunity to live, work, and develop relationships in their communities.

We encourage active family involvement in identifying interests and strengths toward activities and service options that offer access to meaningful opportunities.

Some of the services provided by our Family Connections Center staff are:

- Medical
- Legal
- Financial
- Vocational
- Recreational
- Parent Support
- Social Events

Family Connections Center

The Nemasket Group
109 Fairhaven Road
Mattapoisett, Ma 02739
Tel: (508)999-4436
Fax: (508)997-9239

www.NemasketGroup.org

Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If you would like more information about services provided by the Family Connections Program, you may contact any of the following staff:

Sandra Heller

Associate Executive Director
Family Connections Director
Ext. 128
SandyKinney@NemasketGroup.org

Heidi Pina-Barnes

Family Connections Assistant Director
Ext. 162
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How High School and College Differ for Students with Disabilities



By: **Dina DiGregorio Karlon, M.A.**

Transition Specialist, NESCA

Today, more students with disabilities are opting to attend college. As students plan to pursue college, it's important for them to understand the increased expectations in college in the areas of academics, independence and social environments. For example, while in high school, the responsibility to get the students the services needed to be successful fell on parents and teachers; however, college students must advocate for themselves in post-secondary education. Below are some important ways in which the college and high school settings differ for students with disabilities, as well as some suggested strategies to prepare them.

Applicable Laws – In high school, students with disabilities are covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), which mandates a free, appropriate public education for students with a disability (3-22 years of age). Some students in high school are covered under Section 504. In college, schools must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 – both laws are based on civil rights and prevent discrimination for people with disabilities. In short, IDEA is about *success*; ADA is about *access*.

Required Documentation – In high school, the school district is responsible for providing an evaluation at no cost to the student; this documentation focuses on whether a student is eligible for services under specific disability categories. Colleges are not responsible for the documentation. Students must get an evaluation at their own expense (if documentation is not current). Most colleges will accept current testing (within three years). This documentation must provide information about how the disability impacts the student and demonstrate the need for accommodations. Colleges will list on their website the type of documentation needed.

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Modifications vs. Accommodations – In high school, if necessary, classes and materials may be modified, and the school is responsible for those accommodations and modifications. Some modifications may include reduced assignments or readings, adjusted grading to weigh a student's daily work equal to semester tests. However, in college, there are no modifications to assignments or the curriculum; there are only accommodations. School is no longer responsible for arranging accommodations; rather students must advocate and arrange accommodations for themselves.

Self-disclosure and Self-advocacy – In high school, teachers and parents support the student's needs, with teachers approaching students if they believe assistance is needed. In college, the student is primarily responsible for arranging accommodations and advocating for their own needs. This is a significant shift—not just for the student, but for the parents, too. Parents no longer have access to the student's records. The high school cannot disclose to a college a student's disability—only the student can choose to disclose.

Disclose or Not to Disclose...That is the Question – Choosing to disclose that a student has a disability to a college is a deeply personal decision. As discussed, it is up to the student to disclose. If the student decides to disclose a disability, they need to understand not only the name of the disability, but also be able to communicate and describe how the disability impacts them and their learning. This is critical in determining what types of accommodations will be written into their 504 plan. While in high school, the student should be honest and realistic about the types of accommodations actually used and which of those were helpful. Helping your child practice discussing their disability and how it impacts them is very useful in preparing them to meet with the Office of Disability to share their needs. If a student decides not to disclose, they will not receive accommodations. However, all colleges have some type of tutoring and/or writing center to help students improve their academic skills. If a student chooses not to disclose and does not do well, they can still meet with the Office of Disability at any time to look into a 504 plan. However, their 504 plan will not be retroactive for the semester. Instead, accommodations will start from the date of the plan.

What Can Parents Do?

Preparing your child with a disability is critical to helping them be successful.. Specifically, they will need self-determination skills. Self-determination is the understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective. These skills enable a person to participate in goal-directed, self-regulated, independent behavior. A person with self-determination skills is more likely to be independent and successful in work and training. Some suggested activities to help build self-determination skills include: Teaching your child how to make phone calls to make appointments, write emails with a professional tone and speak directly to people in stores or restaurants. Parents may need to start with a script to help a child practice, then fade support so the child is speaking as independently as possible in various settings. Other activities include having your child plan and prepare a weekly family meal (including making the grocery list, shopping for items, etc.), playing financial literacy games and activities (or talking with your child about how to begin to interact more independently with healthcare providers.

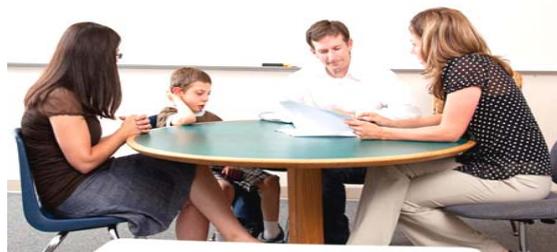
As parents, it is important to know that as your children become more independent, such as going to college, while they are now holding onto the reins, they are likely to need your help with the steering. While these differences may seem daunting, self-advocacy, executive functioning and independent living skills taught throughout an individual's transition to adulthood (starting as early as possible) can help to ease the jump to post-secondary education and its accompanying expectations.

Did You Know

Employment Law Parents May Take FMLA Leave for Special Education Meetings

By Allen Smith, J.D.

Parents can take Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) time off to attend special education meetings—called individualized education program (IEP) meetings—for children with serious health conditions, according to an Aug. 8 U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) opinion letter. FMLA leave likely will increase as parents learn that time off for this purpose is an option, said Sarah Platt, an attorney with Ogletree Deakins in Milwaukee.



"This adds to a long list of the reasons why someone can take FMLA leave," noted Gerald Hathaway, an attorney with Drinker Biddle in New York City. About 20 percent of all households with children have at least one child with special needs.

Request to Use FMLA for IEP Meetings Was Denied

In the opinion letter ([FMLA2019-2-A](#)), a woman received certification from her children's doctors supporting her need to take periodic leave to care for her two children. Her employer approved intermittent FMLA leave to take the children to medical appointments but denied her request to use FMLA time off to attend IEP meetings.

The school district provided the children with doctor-prescribed occupational, speech and physical therapy. Four times a year, the school held IEP meetings to review the students' education and medical needs, well-being, and progress. The meetings were attended by, in addition to teachers and school administrators, a speech pathologist, a school psychologist, an occupational therapist and/or a physical therapist employed by the school district to serve the children.

These individuals gave updates on the children's progress and areas of concern, reviewed recommendations made by the children's doctors, reviewed any new test results and made recommendations for additional therapy. The DOL concluded that the mother's need to attend IEP meetings is a qualifying reason for taking intermittent FMLA leave. Her attendance at IEP meetings is essential to her ability to provide appropriate physical or psychological care to her children, the DOL noted.

Her attendance helps meeting participants:

- Make medical decisions concerning her children's medically prescribed speech, physical and occupational therapy.
- Discuss her children's well-being and progress with the therapy providers.
- Ensure her children's school environment is suitable to their medical, social and academic needs.

The children's doctor does not have to be present at the meetings for the time off to qualify for FMLA leave, the DOL Plan Meetings with Workers.

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FMLA leave for IEP meetings should be manageable, Platt said. IEP meetings typically are scheduled in advance, noted Scott Eldridge, an attorney with Miller Canfield in Lansing, Mich., so periodic leave for them is not as disruptive as unexpected intermittent leave. Plus, IEP meetings occur only a few times per school year.

An employer can require the employee to help identify a meeting time that is the least disruptive, and, Platt added, it can require the worker to provide notice.

"As with any planned medical treatment, keep open lines of communication," she said. The employee may be able to schedule the meeting early in the morning in order to come to work late.

But if an employee can show that meetings must occur at a specific time or day as requested, the employer must provide FMLA leave, absent special circumstances unique to the employer's business needs, said Stephanie Dodge Gournis, an attorney with Drinker Biddle in Chicago.

Medical Certification

Most likely, an employee who is requesting FMLA time off for IEP meetings already has submitted documentation that his or her child has a serious health condition in order to get FMLA leave for the child's medical appointments. But if not, the employer can request it. The safest approach is to use the DOL's form ([Form WH-380-F](#)) to document a family member's serious health condition, according to Platt.

"Certification that the child has a serious health condition is probably sufficient without evidence of an IEP," said Joan Casciari, an attorney with Seyfarth Shaw in Chicago.

Expansive Interpretation of Opinion Letter Is Possible

"Whether the IEP exists is almost irrelevant if the employee has advised that he or she needs to take FMLA leave to attend a meeting at school that is focused on issues associated with the child's serious health condition," said Marjory Robertson, assistant vice president and senior counsel for disability insurance company Sun Life Financial in Wellesley Hills, Mass. "As the DOL points out, caring for a child with a serious health condition can include a wide range of activities."

But some employees may try to expand the DOL's interpretation to apply to emergency meetings with a teacher if a child with a serious health condition had a bad day. This opinion letter does not provide a broad right for all school appointments, Platt said.

The challenge for employers will be determining how an IEP meeting differs from similar school meetings that clearly would not be covered by the FMLA—for example, a student disciplinary meeting, said Jeff Nowak, an attorney with Littler in Chicago.

Some states nonetheless have laws requiring employers to provide leave for parents and guardians to attend some of their children's school-related activities. Jurisdictions with these laws include California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, D.C.

The opinion letter "further complicates and burdens FMLA administration," Nowak said.

Many employers would give workers time off for IEP meetings even without the opinion letter, Hathaway noted. "But the community of parents having children with special needs is fairly well-connected, in social media and other resources," he said, "and so this opinion letter should become well-known fairly rapidly" as the school year starts—increasing the number of FMLA requests.

MESSAGE TO FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM



An Important Message to Massachusetts Families with Children Under Age 9 Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder Open Registration October 17, 2019 to October 31, 2019

The Autism Division of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) runs an 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). This service occurs in the child's home or other natural settings under the supervision of trained clinical staff and is available for a total of three years. The waiver also provides related support services such as community integration activities, individual goods and services, and respite. At the conclusion of the three years of intensive services, a child may access supplemental services that meet the child's needs and help with the transition out of the intensive Autism Waiver Program until the child's 9th birthday.

While the Autism Waiver Program is near capacity at this time, there are always children who leave the Program because they turn 9 or for other reasons. Therefore, we want a current applicant pool to draw from when these spots become available for the Program. Therefore, the Autism Division is offering an opportunity to apply for the waiver through an open request application period. The Autism Division held its last open request registration in October 2018. The open request period runs from October 17 – October 31. **Please be sure to MAIL or EMAIL the application between October 17 and October 31. The Autism Division will discard submission outside of this timeframe.**

For applications please visit,

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/dds-autism-waiver-program-open-interest-period>

Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund

For Massachusetts's families caring for a child or youth under 22 and need financial relief for large medical and related expenses. Available through the Commonwealth's Division for Children & Youth with Special Health Needs. The Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund (CICRF) provides financial assistance to qualified families caring for children with special health needs and disabilities. The CICRF can help families with certain medical and related expenses that are not covered by insurance, public benefits or other financial source.



For more information and to see if you qualify visit www.mass.gov/catastrophic-illness-in-children-relief-fund-cicrf or contact 508-533-1400 x116

Upcoming *Events*

Join the Family Connections Center's Staff at The Nemasket Group for a **FREE** Family Movie Night



When: September 26, 2019

Time: 5:00-7:30pm
Movie will start promptly at 5:15pm

Where: Nemasket Group
109 Fairhaven Road
Mattapoissett, Ma 02739

For information or to RSVP please call Ana Colon
at (508)999-4436 ext. 118 or AnaColon@NemasketGroup.org

Dartmouth's Special Education Parent Advisory Council
Proudly Hosts this FREE EVENT!

**7TH ANNUAL SOUTHCOAST
COMMUNITY
RESOURCE & CRAFT
EXTRAVAGANZA**

Sunday October 20th
From 10am until 3:00pm
Dartmouth High School
555 Bakerville Road

The poster is decorated with various icons representing different fields: a medical cross, a globe with people, a brain, musical notes, a wheelchair, a lightbulb, a person with an 'i' icon, a globe with an eagle, and children playing.

A Full Life Ahead Series Southeast Region

What is Family Support & How Can It Help My Family?

Tuesday, September 24th, 2019
10am- Noon
The Nemasket Group
109 Fairhaven Road, Mattapoisett
RSVP: kathleen@massfamilies.org

Come and join us for an informative training that will cover not only the history of the family support movement, but also what it is, how to access it, and ways in which it can help your loved one live a meaningful life.

Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC) in partnership with the Building Futures Project and the Family Connections Center of The Nemasket Group is sponsoring "A Full Life Ahead". A series of monthly workshops for parents and guardians of individuals with disabilities. The series focuses on transition, employment, housing, friendships, and other topics that will lead to interdependent full lives in the community for people with disabilities.



Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change

A grassroots coalition of individuals with disabilities and/or medical needs and their families.



Fifth Annual Disability Summit

The Massachusetts Office on Disability annual Summit began in 2015. This event is designed to bring together and inspire leaders, advocates, and persons with disabilities by focusing on issues that impact the disability community.

Please, join us on **Friday, September 27** for our 5th annual disability summit. We are well underway in assembling a robust program that will address various topics.

The 2019 Disability Summit will take place at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, Conference Rooms 258 A, B, & C. The BCEC is located at 415 Summer St, Boston, MA 02210

General inquiries may be emailed to mod-events@mass.gov or MOD's event line at 617-727-7440 extension 27318.

Community Autism Resources presents:

Microwave Cooking

Come and learn how to make quick and easy snacks and meals in the microwave or if you already know how to use a microwave, come and learn some new recipes. Each student will go home with a copy of each recipe and will also learn the dos and do not's of cooking in a microwave!



This event is open to ages 16 and up, who are diagnosed with ASD living in our service region.

This event is going to be facilitated by Shannon Witter, speech pathologist.

Wednesdays – October 2, 9, 16, 23 AND 30TH

4:30PM - 6:00PM

At: 355 Plymouth St., East Bridgewater, Ma

This event is free. Pre- registration is required to attend prior to September 26, 2019.

You must pre-register via www.community-autism-resources.com

Please call Cassie Ricco if you have any questions at 774-381-7919 or via email cricco@community-autism-resources.com

Kitchen Skills 101

Facilitated by: Patricia Murphy, Certified Health Coach

If you are interested in being more active in the kitchen, but need to learn a few basic skills, this class is for you! You will:

- Be introduced to various kitchen tools (measuring cups, knives) and how to use them safely
- Learn how to read and follow a recipe including
 - Recognizing the elements of a good recipe
 - Understanding serving size
 - Preparing all ingredients
 - Following the recipe step by step
- Practice your skills by creating a yogurt parfait that you can easily make at home for a meal or snack!



When: Wednesday, October 23rd

10am – 12pm

Where: The Nemasket Group

109 Fairhaven Road

Mattapoissett, MA 02739

To register, please visit: <https://conta.cc/31yKhvU>

Registration is limited, so don't wait to register!

For questions, please contact Becky Morrissey at Rebecca.Morrissey@massmail.state.ma.us

Parent's Retreat

Annual Parent Retreat...Reflecting on the Journey

October 12 - October 13
Whispering Pines Conference Center
West Greenwich, RI

The primary purpose of the annual Parent Retreat is to provide a relaxing and supportive environment for parents or caregivers to reflect on, explore, and share the rewards and challenges of raising a child with ASD. There will be opportunities for relaxation, discussion, networking, making new friends, and learning from other parents, in a beautiful country setting with great food. Although there will be opportunities to learn, the format is that of a retreat, not a conference. The atmosphere is relaxed and casual.



"Evaluation questionnaires suggest that the retreat has become far more than a weekend "breather" from the stress and challenges of raising a child with ASD. Parents report sustained long-lasting effects, and some describe a remarkable impact. It also enables not only the sharing of resources to cope with and address everyday challenges, but also encourages the development of new coping strategies so that they can return home with a renewed sense of energy and purpose."

Schedule: The retreat runs from Saturday morning to Sunday after lunch, participants must commit to the full retreat (attendance for one day is not permitted).

How you use your time is very flexible.

Funds to subsidize retreat expenses come from fundraising activities, donations, and grants.

Cost of the Retreat is: \$500.00 per couple, \$250.00 for a single.

Space is LIMITED.

There are limited full and partial scholarships available.

The Retreat registration fee includes: lodging for Saturday night and all meals and gratuities (Saturday: Continental Breakfast, Lunch, cocktail hour appetizers, and dinner. Sunday: Full Breakfast and Luncheon.)

For more information please contact:

Community Autism Resources
33 James Reynolds Rd. Unit C
Swansea, Ma 02777
(508)379-0371

VALUING LIVES

WOLF WOLFENSBERGER AND THE PRINCIPLE OF NORMALIZATION

“Valuing Lives: Wolf Wolfensberger and the Principle of Normalization,” is a historical documentary exploring an idea that forever changed human services.

A film documenting the social paradigm shift triggered by Wolf Wolfensberger, a professor and change agent who, in the early 1970s, popularized and expanded the principle of normalization of people with disabilities into a framework for community inclusion.

Through archival images and footage, and dozens of interviews, *Valuing Lives* explores the principle of normalization, an idea originating in Scandinavia that challenged fundamental assumptions about people with intellectual disabilities, and the iconoclastic professor whose writings and intense workshops trained thousands of human services professionals in the theory and practice of this idea.

This brought about a sea change in thinking at a time when it was considered normal to warehouse nearly 200,000 Americans with intellectual disabilities in large institutions. Wolfensberger helped change the conversation from institutional reform to rethinking society's assumptions of disability and the role of human services.

There are still institutions for people with intellectual disabilities, and some voices are calling for new, segregated communities where, it is believed, they will be safer “with their own kind.” It is time for a new generation of leaders to rediscover the principle of normalization.

The film will be followed by a discussion with Jack Yates. Jack worked to both learn from and teach with Dr. Wolfensberger, for over forty years.

Please RSVP by calling Amy Cornell at 508-999-4436 or emailing amycornell@nemasketgroup.org

Thursday, October 10, 2019 from 9:00—11:00 a.m.

**The Nemasket Group
109 Fairhaven Road, Mattapoisett MA**

the
nemasket
group

October 10

**9:00 a.m.
to
11:00 a.m.**

As a Family Support Center we offer a wide range of supports and services to individuals with disabilities and their families across the lifespan. These include information and referral, service navigation, support groups, parent networking, family trainings, social/recreational activities.

By completing this questionnaire we will provide families with opportunities to meet other families through networking and organized social inclusion community activities. We will also have some input on what families would want us to offer. Your ideas and responses will be confidential and greatly appreciated.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____

Name(s) & Age(s) of Child (ren): _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

SUPPORT GROUPS

Are you interested in participating in a support group? _____ YES _____ NO

What are the best days and times to meet?

Monday _____ Tuesday _____ Wednesday _____ Thursday _____ Friday _____ Saturday _____

Times: Morning: _____ Afternoon: _____ Evening: _____

Please list specific topics that you are interested to discuss in a Support Group:

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Are you and your family interested in Social Activities? _____ YES _____ NO

If so, please list social activities you would like to see offered at the Family Connections Center (i.e. Movie Nights, Ice Cream Day, Parents Night out etc....)

WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS

Would you attend a Workshop's offered at the Family Connections Center? _____ YES _____ NO

If so, please list some workshop/training topics of interest to you:

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO ANA COLON
The Nemasket Group, 109 Fairhaven Road, Mattapoisett, Ma 02739