

Family Connections Center

Parent Support Group ASD & other abilities....



Save the Date

Monday, December 9th at 10 a.m.

At the Family Connections Center

The Nemasket Group

109 Fairhaven Rd Mattapoissett, MA 02739

RSVP: Ana Colon 508-999-4436 ext 118 or email anacolon@nemasketgroup.org

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 or SandyKinney@NemasketGroup.org

Heidi Pina-Barnes

Family Connections Assistant Director
Ext. 162 or
HeidiPina-Barnes@NemasketGroup.org

Ana Colon

Family Support Advisor
Ext. 118 or AnaColon@NemasketGroup.org

Shanell Stewart

Family Support Advisor
Ext. 161 or ShanellStewart@NemasketGroup.org

Food for *Thought*

It's About TRUST

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow, www.disabilityisnatural.com

When my son was five and included in a general ed kindergarten class, the teacher and I were somewhat at odds. At my urging, we met with the principal to try to resolve our differences. During one of my many efforts to maintain a positive relationship with her (for the ultimate benefit of my son), I told her that this was all about my son's education, not about the two of us, and added, "You must know that I think highly of you: I trust you enough to turn my son over to you ever day."

Just saying the words that day brought home how important trust really is. Every school day that year, I relinquished physical control of my precious five-year-old son, and turned him over to this teacher (and others). When you really think about it, doesn't that entail an enormous degree of trust?

Nineteen-year-old Trey moved into a group home about six months ago. His mom, Christine, took this step reluctantly, and drives three hours each way to visit her son several times each month. She routinely expresses her worries and fears. On several visits, she became aware that things weren't as they were supposed to be. Christine and Trey met with the staff to resolve the issues, and she's hoping and praying that her trust in the staff is not misplaced.

Every day, as regards the care of their children, millions of parents put their trust in others. Countless children and adults with disabilities put their trust in teachers, service

providers, therapists, and others. These people are paid to provide care, education, or services of one sort or another. Do they truly understand the importance of trust? Do they understand how much people are counting on them? Do they understand people's lives are in their hands? Do they understand the responsibilities involved?

Can they imagine what it's like to be the mother or father, wondering if your child is safe with the teacher at school?

Wondering if your child is crying, bored, happy, feels safe and cared about, and so much more? Hoping the people who are with your child will surround him with love and kindness? Hoping a word or a gesture doesn't injure the child's heart or mind?

Can they imagine what it's like to be a child with hopes and dreams, a child who is trusting in the grown-ups around him to support those hopes and dreams? Can they imagine what it's like to be an adult who wants to be in control of his life, and who is trusting in those around him to support those efforts?

I hope every professional, teacher, therapist, service provider, and anyone else who works with children and adults with disabilities will take the issue of trust very seriously. I hope they will try to put themselves of the shoes of the children and adults with disabilities they service, and their family members. I hope everything they say and do is equal to the trust which has been placed in them.



Did You Know

What is the Fuel Assistance Program?

It is an energy assistance program that can help you pay for heating your house or apartment ring the heating season, between November 1st and April 30th of each year.

Homeowners and renters, including households whose cost of heat is included in the rent, can apply in person at the agency in their area.

What benefits are available?

The Fuel Assistance Program can help you pay for any fuel (including but not limited to: oil, propane, natural gas, Kerosene, wood, coal, or electric) that you use to heat your house or apartment. If your rent includes heat, the Fuel Assistance Program may help you pay a portion of your rent.

When can you apply?

The application process for the 2019-2020 heating season will begin in November 2019. Applications will be taken by fuel assistance agencies until April 30, 2020. You should apply as soon as possible, as applicants are served on a first come first serve basis. If you received fuel assistance benefits last year, you will receive an application in the mail. If you do not receive a fuel assistance application in the mail, apply by calling and/or visiting the nearest fuel assistance agency in your area.

Where can you apply?

You can apply for fuel assistance at an agency in or near your community. A complete list of fuel assistance agencies are on the internet at <http://www.mass.gov/dhcd> or you can call the toll-free "Heatline" at: **1-800-632-8175**. Information about other programs is also available at this number and website.

What verifications do you need?

You must show proof of your monthly income. If you receive TAFDC or EAEDC, the enclosed notice contains the verification of your monthly cash assistance. Mail this notice with your application, or take it with you to the nearest fuel assistance agency. Be sure to save the notice until you apply for fuel assistance. You may be eligible for other discounts from your utility company. Ask your utility company for the income guidelines for these discounts.

Can you get help with heat and utility bills from Emergency Assistance?

No. You are not eligible to receive help to cover heat and utility arrearage payments through the Emergency Assistance Program.



Nicky's Law The Abuse Registry Bill

There is presently no system to track individuals whose act of abuse against individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) has been substantiated. The proposed legislation Nicky's Law (H 4074/S 2367), also known as The Abuse Registry Bill, seeks to change that.

What is the current status of Nicky's Law?

On October 17, 2019, Nicky's Law was unanimously passed by the Massachusetts State Senate.

The Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) screened 11,395 cases in the past year. In FY 2017, a total of 2,571 investigations were deemed necessary through DPPC screening. In 2017, 1,478 abuse reports were referred to the appropriate District Attorney's Office ("DA"). Only 102 of those referrals resulted in criminal charges (less than 10%).



The Chan family, with Nicky (second from right), the namesake of the bill

The Current Situation

In the last decade, the ratio of criminal charges to abuse case referrals have been in the range of 10%-15%. This real-life statistic meant that some other mechanism was needed to protect people with disabilities from caretakers who had committed substantiated incidents of abuse, but who had not been criminally charged or convicted.

The reality that someone can be substantiated for abuse as determined by the state agency responsible, namely the DPPC, but can work the following week, month or year at another location with vulnerable individuals is simply wrong and against the public interest.

The Proposed Solution

The solution: a "mandatory abuse registry" law. A bill filed by Senator Michael Moore and Representative Linda Campbell known as "Nicky's Law" (similar to Dana's Law filed last session by Senator O'Connor) initially targets caretakers funded through or working for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

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It is important to note that this bill is not a “criminal justice” bill. It is a protection against abuse and neglect and it is a way to restrict those who have been demonstrated to be abusive from working with vulnerable individuals. The DPPC reported rate of substantiation in 2018 was 15-17%. For sexual abuse cases, the reported rate from DPPC is 10-12%. The cases in which there are criminal charges are a subset of these cases. This bill does not make new recommendations in relation to the referrals to the DA’s or the courts.

Important Notes

The bill does require that the names of the staff persons (through state or private employment) be placed onto a registry against whom a substantiated finding of abuse of a person with I/DD has been issued by the DPPC. DDS and DDS funded providers would not be able to hire someone on that registry. The registry includes a comprehensive formal appeal process through the Division of Administrative Law Appeals (DALA). Specifics on the registry and the level of abuse which rise to inclusion in the registry are left to regulation. The bills filed this session have been negotiated with the Committee on Public Counsel Services to satisfy concerns on due process for those who are subject to the registry.



Our Highlighted Programs

See, Touch and Try. Assistive Technology Regional Centers are operating in western, central and eastern Massachusetts; visit them to learn about, try out or borrow assistive technology.

Website Massachusetts Assistive Technology Loan Program (MATLP) is an alternative financing program funded through state and federal resources to give people with disabilities and their family’s access to low-interest cash loans to buy the assistive technology devices they need.

Equipment: Choose to reuse your D M EDMEquipment.org offers free gently-used, refurbished wheelchairs and other DME to people who need it. Delivery is available. Search for available items here.

Go To Get AT Stuff. MassMATCH is happy to announce the establishment of Get AT Stuff Massachusetts, a new Assistive Technology Exchange website. Here visitors can shop for used equipment or advertise what they are no longer using.

Upcoming *Events*

AANE

**The Daniel W. Rosenn
Connections Conference**

**Keynote, Becca Lory Hector
"Self-Defined Living
on the Autism Spectrum"**

November 16, 2019

Best Western Royal Plaza
Hotel & Trade Center
Marlborough, MA

◆ 14 Breakout Sessions / 2 Workshop Options
◆ Advanced Registration Required

What is success to you?

* **Key Note Speaker Becca Lory Hector** was diagnosed on the autism spectrum as an adult and has since become an autism advocate, consultant, speaker, and author. She writes a monthly blog, *Live Positively Autistic*, and co-hosts a bi-weekly podcast *Spectrumly Speaking*. Becca has dual certifications as a Certified Autism Specialist and Cognitive Specialist. Becca also sits on the Board of Directors of multiple Autism support organizations, and is a contributing author of *Spectrum Women: Walking to the Beat of Autism* and serves as an Assistant Editor and Feature Writer at *Spectrum Women Magazine*.

Fees apply, registration required to www.eventbrite.com/e/becca-lory-hector-at-aanes-daniel-w-rosenn-connections-conference-tickets-66564023787 or call 617 393-3824 or email Events@aane.org

Conference Topics can include:

- Practical Strategies for Parenting without Panic: for Parents of Children and Teens on the Autism Spectrum, Brenda Dater, MSW, MPH
- Looking at Trauma and Anxiety through the EMDR Framework, Tonya White, LMHC
- Effective Advocacy and Disclosure: A Workshop for People on the Autism Spectrum, Stephen Shore, Ed.D (Part 2)
- Transition Planning for Life After School, Kelley Challen, Ed.M., CAS (Part 2)
- And more....

Free Special Education Training for Surrogate Parents

November 20, 2019

Understanding & Navigating Transition to Adulthood for Special needs in Massachusetts Teens Parents Young Adults Fiske Public Library, Wrentham, MA, 2019. If you are interested in supporting students in your community, consider volunteering to become a Special Education Surrogate Parent (SESP) for a student in state care that requires special education supports and whose parents are unknown or unavailable.

Registration is required to <https://fcsn.org/rtsc/orientations/>
or contact Ivone Rego, Email: irego@fcsn.org, 617-399-8342

Night in the Blue Hills: An Accessible Adventure

November 23, 2019

Explore the night-time woods in the Blue Hills and discover how nighttime darkness changes your sensory abilities. While using a park path that is accessible for wheelchairs or other mobility devices, you may look and listen for animals, and (conditions permitting) gaze at the stars.

- The path begins at a paved parking lot at Houghton's pond. Starting at a level, hard-packed, 4 foot wide gap between a metal gate and a boulder, the path is flat, level, and hardened with packed gravel. At about an eighth of a mile in, the path reveals its true identity: a paved, abandoned stretch of Route 128 from the days when the highway was only two lanes wide. Cars haven't traveled on this stretch of road since 1960, and it is free of ruts and potholes. Restrooms are available at the museum at the beginning and end of the program.
- Please contact the museum if you or a member of your party may need additional assistance or information in order to participate in this event.
- There is no admission charge for personal aides, but please contact the museum if someone in your party will be accompanied by an aide.

Fees apply, registration is required to www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/blue-hills/69714-night-in-the-blue-hills-an-accessible-adventure or contact Miranda Bloom, bluehills@massaudubon.org or call 617-333-0690

Children's Museum Family Autism Night

November 29, 2019

Easton, November 29th, 2019. For families with Autistic children age 10 and under. All three floors of the Museum will be open to provide a quieter option for play. Free of charge to all families with kids on the autism spectrum, **but pre – registration is required.** Hosted by the Children's Museum of Easton.

For more information visit or www.cmeaston.org/events/family-autism-night-nov29/
or call 508- 230- 3789

Sensory-Friendly Museum Tour & Play Date

December 2, 2019
10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

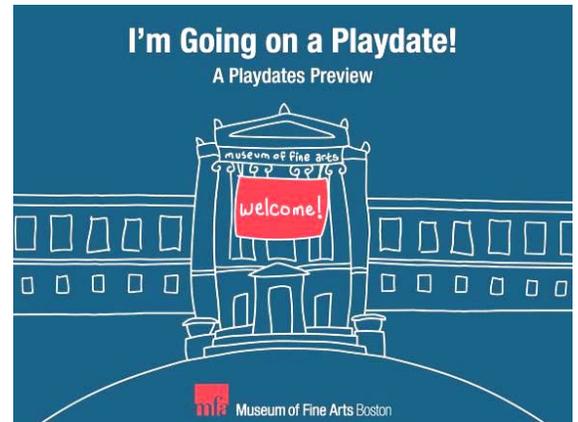
A welcoming, inclusive museum tour, story time and play date for children 4 and younger and accompanying adults to engage with art at the Museum. Completed tours will return to a quieter, low-lit gallery for toddler art making activities.

Play dates include:

- Specially trained teachers
- Sensory-friendly educational materials
- Designated “take a break” spaces
- Social story to prepare for a visit
- Communication supports
- Headphones, fidget toys, and lap desks upon request

More information:

- Tours leave on a rolling basis starting at 10:15 am. No registration required.
- Each month focuses on a specific theme.
- Program is included with Museum admission, no registration is required.
- All galleries are stroller accessible; please plan on bringing your stroller on your tour.
- All galleries are accessible by elevator.



For all dates and more information visit www.mfa.org or contact nlopes@mfa.org or access@mfa.org, or 617-267-9300 or 617-369-3188 (TTY).

“Beyond the Spectrum” Autism/ASD Art Class

December 7, 2019
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. For kids with Autism Spectrum Disorders, ages 10 – 12. Artful Healing and Beyond the Spectrum offer a specially designed program for Autism Spectrum, including Asperger’s Syndrome, accompanied by a parent or caregiver. December’s Theme – Amazing Abstraction. How do artists create images and inspire emotions using just color, texture, shape, and line? Look at examples of abstract paintings and prints, and learn about these important elements of art. Then, return to the studio to make your own abstract prints.

* Fees Apply

For more information www.mfa.org/programs/community-programs/beyond-the-spectrum or contact 617-369-4027.

Understanding & Navigating the Transition to Adulthood for Special needs in Massachusetts

December 10, 2019
Norton Public Library, Norton, MA

If you are interested in supporting students in your community, consider volunteering to become a Special Education Surrogate Parent (SESP) for a student in state care that requires special education supports and whose parents are unknown or unavailable.

- These children depend on SESP's to protect their legal right to a free and appropriate education.
- SESP's serve as appointed decision makers that have the legal authority of a parent or legal guardian to attend and participate in special education team meetings, approve or reject Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and if necessary, file complaints or appeals. On average, the time commitment is only 30-40 hours a year.
- The Recruitment, Training and Support Center (RTSC) hosts these free Orientation Trainings throughout Massachusetts, where you will learn about the role of an SESP, how traumatic experiences can impact learning and how to incorporate the appropriate supports into the IEP.

Registration is required to <https://fcsn.org/rtsc/orientations/> or contact Ivone Rego, irego@fcsn.org, 617-399-8342

Play Pals

Play and Learn Group for preschool age children and parents.

Please join us for an informal meeting with other special needs parents. Bring your young non-school age children with all abilities to play. While they are playing we parents get to mingle with other parents going through the same things. We can bounce ideas off each other and learn resources from one another (We can learn anything from a good ENT to a great gymnastics class).



When: December 18, 2019
10:00 a.m.

Where: The Nemasket Group
109 Fairhaven Road, Mattapoissett, MA 02739

RSVP to: Shanell Stewart at 508.999.4436 x 161
Email: ShanellStewart@nemasketgroup.org



The Arc of Massachusetts 2019 Transition Conference

Charting the LifeCourse during the Transition Years

WHEN: Saturday, November 16, 2019
WHERE: The College of the Holy Cross, Worcester
REGISTER: <http://bit.ly/ArcMAConference>

This full day conference will feature the **LifeCourse Frameworks and Tools** from the Institute for Human Development at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Co-founder and parent **Jane St. John** will lead us through the frameworks and tools to use in transition planning.



The conference welcomes families of teens and adults ages 12-26. The day is filled with over 27 workshops, exhibits and more! There is something for everyone, including 3 workshops in Spanish!

<https://thearcofmass.org/conference/>
<https://www.lifecoursetools.com/>

**Thanks to the organizations who came together to assist
in the planning of the 2019 Transition Conference!**

The Arc of Greater Haverhill-Newburyport Autism Commission, Cambiando el Mundo de Personas con Discapacidad Centro Communitas, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), The Guild for Human Services, HMEA, Mass Advocates for Children (MAC), Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC), Mass Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), Merrimack College, The Nemasket Group,