

# Medically Complex Program

We have 2 great opportunities for you to help yourselves, others, and The Nemasket Group.

Come join our Medically Complex Advisory Committee.



The committee will meet virtually on Zoom and will be looking for ways to help families get information, get resources and connect. The Nemasket Group's Medically Complex Program realizes that you know best what your children may need. So we invite you to make your voice heard and let's get together to help make your children's future better.

Please email Shanell [Stewart@nemasketgroup.org](mailto:Stewart@nemasketgroup.org) for more information.

Do you have an interest in being part of our parent to parent support group?



This group will meet virtually on Zoom and will focus on parents helping parents with the same questions, struggles, breakthroughs, etc. as other parents. For example, if you are in the middle of a Home Modification and need help finding builders, the group will ask others would have gone through the process who they would recommend. If you are in the middle of shopping for a new van and need a good deal. Let's ask other parents. If you need help finding a good dentist, PCP, or even a new nursing agency. Let's ask.

Some of us just need an ear to listen to us because our family, friends, neighbors, etc., don't get us like other parents do. We, as parents, never give ourselves enough credit for all the knowledge that we have and we never want to ask another parent for help but they may just know the answer.

Please email [ShanellStewart@nemasketgroup.org](mailto:ShanellStewart@nemasketgroup.org) for more information.

## Medically Complex Program at The Nemasket Group

109 Fairhaven Road, Mattapoisett, MA 02739

Tel: (508)999-4436      Emergency Tel: 508-207-2538      Fax: (508)997-9239



**Sandra Heller**  
Associate Executive Director  
Medically Complex Program Director  
Ext. 128  
[SandyKinney@NemasketGroup.org](mailto:SandyKinney@NemasketGroup.org)



**Shanell Stewart**  
Medically Complex Program Assistant Director  
Ext. 161  
[ShanellStewart@NemasketGroup.org](mailto:ShanellStewart@NemasketGroup.org)



**Patrick Russell**  
Medically Complex Program Advisor  
Ext. 106  
[PatrickRussell@NemasketGroup.org](mailto:PatrickRussell@NemasketGroup.org)

## The Salvation Army 2021 Christmas Assistance

Registration is now underway! Due to increasing needs, please sign up early!

**All questions can be directed to our Social Service Office at 508.997.6561.**

As we continue to recover from the pandemic, we anticipate that more people in our community will need assistance this year. Registration has returned to "in-person only."

Masks are required. Early registration is recommended.

For more information, visit: <https://massachusetts.salvationarmy.org/MA/NEBHoliday>

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## As School Returns, Kids With Special Needs Are Left Behind

**For special-needs students, trying to return to the classroom, or just staying at home, presents a new set of challenges.**

By Hallie Levine

Published Sept. 17, 2021

This past summer, Ashley Garan was consumed with worry about her 9-year-old son, Max, who has severe autism. For the last four years, Max attended Giant Steps, a private [special-needs](#) school in Southport, Conn., but the school closed its doors permanently in June, citing concerns that it would not be able to keep students and staff safe during the pandemic.

While Max's twin, Molly, was set to start the school year in Greenwich on Sept. 8, at the neighborhood public elementary school, there seemed very few options available for Max, who is intellectually disabled, nonverbal and prone to self-harming behavior such as banging his head into the wall. While he initially began his education in the public school system, by the time he was in kindergarten Garan had requested that the district outplace him to a private school.

"The staff wasn't trained to handle his needs — I would hear horror stories about how he was lying in the middle of the hallway licking the floor," she recalled.

Just over seven million, or roughly 14 percent, of public school students receive special education services, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), passed in 1975, school districts are required to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. (In cases like Max's, where a school district can't meet a child's needs, they are legally required to pay for a private education.)

When the coronavirus pandemic first hit, the Education [Department](#) stressed that all public schools that would be providing virtual or online education during the pandemic must continue to serve their students with disabilities. But a [survey](#) released at the end of May by the advocacy group ParentsTogether, found that 40 percent of kids in special education hadn't received any support at all, and only 20 percent received all the services they were entitled to. Over a third were doing little to no remote learning, compared with 17 percent of their general education peers.

...continued on page 3

## Parents grapple with the complexities of remote learning

As the new school year gets underway and more and more school districts adopt remote-learning plans, parents of special-needs children are bracing themselves for another year of little to no support. Camie Rodan, 37, worries about a year of lost kindergarten for her 5-year-old son, Solly, who has cerebral palsy. Her family moved from Nashville, Tenn., to Los Angeles County this past winter, and in early March she requested that the school district assess Solly, who had previously attended a private preschool, for special education services. Ten days later schools were shut down, and a state bill was passed on March 17, [SB-117](#), that allowed school districts to put these types of assessments on hold until districts opened again for in-person learning.



Rather than have Solly begin school without any supports or services — such as a special-education teacher and occupational, physical and speech therapies to help him access distance learning — Rodan has opted to pull him out of the school system this year and home-school instead. “Solly is nonverbal and in a wheelchair — he can’t even scribble lines, much less form a letter,” she said. Rodan plans to pay out-of-pocket for extra services with a private therapy team, but “there’s no way he will be able to receive anything close to an adequate education this school year.”

Similar struggles are playing out across the country, as parents grapple with how to deal with the complexities of remote learning. What many families don’t realize, said Denise Marshall, CEO of the [Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates](#) (COPAA), an independent national association that protects the legal and civil rights of students with disabilities, is that the federal laws surrounding special education, specifically IDEA, remain exactly the same. (SB-117 was passed during a temporary emergency, and if California school districts continue to hold off on providing assessments they may be in violation of federal law, she added.)

“School districts still seem to be convincing parents that the way the things that are done right now are different because of Covid-19, but that’s not the case,” said Marshall. This past July, groups representing school administrators, such as the School Superintendents Association, called on Congress to grant them liability protections related to their obligations under IDEA. But the U.S. Department of Education had [denied](#) similar requests this past spring, she said, and there’s no reason to think legislators will allow IDEA to be relaxed now.



In fact, under IDEA, students with disabilities are still entitled to compensatory services once the school year begins, even if school hasn’t officially reopened in person, said [Perry Zirkel](#), Ph.D., J.D., professor emeritus of education and law at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa. He recommends requesting a meeting at the beginning of the school year with your child’s IEP (individualized education program) team, so that you can meet and determine your child’s present level of performance. If a parent can show that their child has actually regressed from where they were on the day schools closed for the pandemic, then they’re eligible for more intense services, Zirkel added.

## Lack of funds and safety concerns for in-school learning

Further complicating the issue is the fact that many school districts want to do the right thing for students with disabilities, but don’t have the necessary funds to do so, said John Eisenberg, executive director of the [National Association of State Directors of Special Education](#) (NASDSE). “They’re facing massive budget deficits due to implementing safety measures for the pandemic, and the unique needs of kids with more significant disabilities — special busing, complex technology — drives the cost up even more,” he explained. A Senate bill, [S4100](#), Supporting Children with Disabilities During Covid-19 Act, sponsored by

Democratic senators Chris Murphy and Maggie Hassan, has sought to appropriate \$11 billion for state grants under IDEA, but it's currently on hold in Congress.

In some cases, where districts do have the funds, they have gone in the other direction, allowing children with disabilities back to school five days a week, even while their typical peers do hybrid or remote learning.

But for some parents, that has its own set of challenges. Maggie Gaines, 47, has a 7-year-old daughter, Margot, who has Down syndrome. Margot is going into first grade, and up until the pandemic had always spent at least 80 percent of her day in the general education classroom, instead of a self-contained classroom with other special education students.



Her school district in Wayne, Pa., is beginning the school year virtually and will allow parents to opt their children into a hybrid model on Oct. 9. Children with developmental disabilities, like Margot, will also have the option to return to school full-time in October, but only two of those days will be in the general education classroom. The remaining three will be spent in the Life Skills classroom working with a special-education teacher and related therapists, something that Gaines has rejected. "I don't just want her sitting on a computer all day in a segregated classroom with her aide," said Gaines, who is now exploring sending Margot to a learning lab at her local Y.M.C.A. on her nonschool days, so that she can be with her typical peers.

"She's only in first grade, but it's in these younger grades when friendships are easiest to form and when all kids are learning social skills," she explained. "It's definitely a hard trade-off."

There's also a concern among some parents and educators that if it's not safe for all students to return, then it's not safe for kids with disabilities. "People with disabilities have historically been 'guinea pigs' for medical experiments," said Valerie Williams, director of government relations for NASDSE. Williams, who has a 9-year old son, Matthew, with Down syndrome, said that even if her school district in Maryland offers some in-person services for him this fall, she will keep him home. "It's not worth the risk to his and our family's health," she said.

Instead, Williams has worked closely with her son's team of educators, as well as his school district's special education administrators, to make sure he gets as comprehensive an online program as possible. "Matthew's not getting all the services in his IEP, but it's unrealistic to ask for perfection right now," she said. "But his school has done a good job of collaborating and communicating with me, and I can honestly say they are doing all that they can at this point."

On a positive note, more school districts and families of kids with disabilities are working together — like Williams and her son's Maryland district — to try to make sure their children's educational needs are being met, said [Nina Gupta](#), an education attorney at Nelson Mullins law firm in Atlanta, who often represents school districts. While relationships between parents of kids with special needs and school districts can often be antagonistic, "we're really seeing a collaborative trend, which we all hope continues because we know that leads to the best outcomes," she added.

Some parents, though, have become frustrated enough to take matters into their own hands. After a summer spent touring local special-needs schools, Garan found that most were either unable or unwilling to accept Max because of his extreme behaviors. Along with other families from Giant Steps, she joined a new, small private special-needs school, Hubbard Day, in Greenwich.

Max began his school year on Sept. 10. "He seems so much happier being back in a structured school setting," said Garan. "The next morning, he was so excited to return, he was out the door before I had time to brush his teeth. All any parent wants is to know that their child is safe and happy and learning. Right now, I finally have that."



# Thanks and Cookies at Youth Services



**Monday, November 15, 2021 at 4 pm**

New Bedford Free Public Library, 613 Pleasant St, New Bedford

Celebrate the season of thanks by sharing what you are thankful for on a leaf to add to our thankful tree display and decorate a special snack to take home.

This free youth event requires no registration and is available while supplies last. Please be advised for any potential food allergies.

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## No Sibling Left Behind



**Webinar, November 16th, 2021**

No Sibling Left Behind provides an overview of the sibling experience, sibling movement, and research trends, as well as strategies and tips to support siblings of people with disabilities. This is offered across the sibling's lifespan and includes providing information and education, creating welcoming communities for siblings, and improving access to sibling services.

Presented by Massachusetts Sibling Support Network

Registration is required. Visit: [www.nspac.org/Registration](http://www.nspac.org/Registration) or contact [NSPAC1@GMAIL.COM](mailto:NSPAC1@GMAIL.COM)

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## Family Bingo!

Saturday, November 27, 2021 at 1 PM  
Plymouth Memorial Hall

Come join us for our first Family Bingo Event! Light refreshments will be provided during the event. Enjoy a night where you can win some cool prizes!

This event is FREE with pre-registration. Donations will be accepted at the event for our Manomet Youth Center and Scholarship Fund.

Register at: [https://plymouthma.myrec.com/.../program\\_details.aspx...](https://plymouthma.myrec.com/.../program_details.aspx...)



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## 8th Annual Truckin' MV (touch-a-truck)



Sat Nov 20, 2021. Rain or Shine

IT'S BACK!!! You don't want to miss the 8th Annual Truckin' MV! Touch your favorite big trucks and unique vehicles from the Island community, and enjoy live children's music, face painting, raffles, food and refreshments!

\$10 per child or \$25 per family (free admission for adults)

# WORKING TOGETHER

A FREE Special Education Webinar Series for Families

PROVIDED BY



MassFamilies

NOV  
30

## MASSACHUSETTS ANTI-BULLYING LAW: IEP & SCHOOL-WIDE STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

This workshop will focus on laws that require both school-wide efforts to create safe and supportive school environments for students with disabilities and laws that require IEP Teams to address bullying of students with disabilities. This will be more important now while students adjust to being back in school with their peers, during the COVID-19 recovery.

**Training sessions will be held via Zoom from 7:00-8:30pm.  
Register at [massfamilies.org/training/working-together-series/](https://massfamilies.org/training/working-together-series/)**

## Spindle City Festival

Saturday, November 27, 2021 at 10 AM – 3 PM  
Narrows Center for the Arts, 16 Anawan Street, Fall River, MA 02721

Spindle City Fest is a free family-centric event that celebrates art, music, food and fun.

From 10:00AM - 3:00PM there will be Narrows' studio artists, unique art and food vendors, yoga, and food tastings. High quality art vendors will be represented in an array of mediums including painting, resin creations, jewelry, etc. It wouldn't be a Narrows event without great live music. Southcoast Brass Band will be keeping the good vibes going throughout the event.

Free parking is available at the Narrows Center as well as the surrounding neighborhood.

Spindle City Fest is a FREE event, sponsored in part by the Fall River Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.



# Holiday Cash & Chance Item Raffle

Both raffles will be drawn on Monday, December 13th.  
 You do not need to be present to win.  
 Winners will be notified by phone or email provided.

1st Prize \$500

2nd Prize \$250

3rd Prize \$150

+Over 30 Non Cash Prizes

\$10.00 for 1 book of 10 Tickets

To purchase tickets, view a list of available prizes & for more information visit

## Nemasket Holiday Basket Raffle

 **Basket 1**  
**Hand Made Baby Quilt**  
 dimensions 67" x 50" mostly pink  
**Twinkle & Cuddle Soother**  
**Piggy Bank**  
 Oh Baby the Places You Will Go  
 Dr. Suess  
 Value \$355

**Basket 2**  
**Great Wolf Lodge**  
 \$400 use anytime gift card  
**Wiley the Wolf Toy**  
  
 Value \$420

**Basket 3**  
**Cricut Joy Storage Case**   
**Cricut Joy 2021 Bible**  
**Permanent Vinyl Rolls**  
 gold, black, white  
**\$100 Michael's Gift Card**  
 Value \$311

**Ticket Pricing**  
 Most Credit Cards Accepted

One	\$3.00
Two	\$5.00
Five	\$10.00
Eleven	\$20.00

**Basket 4**   
**Farm Visits**  
**Travelling Petting Zoo**  
**Piggy Planter**  
 Value \$370

**Basket 5**  
**Ryobi Snow Blower**  
 40V HP 18 in cordless electric  
**2022 Farmer's Almanac**  
  
 Value \$439



# VaxAbilities

COVID Vaccine events across Massachusetts for children and adults with disabilities and sensory support needs

**Pediatric (5-17), Adult and Boosters available**

**Schedule an appointment:  
[www.VaxAbilities.com](http://www.VaxAbilities.com)**



# VaxAbilities

Eventos de vacunación contra el COVID-19 por todo Massachusetts para niños y adultos con discapacidades y necesidades de apoyos sensoriales

**Disponibilidad de vacunas pediátricas (5-17 años), adultos, y de refuerzo**

**Haga una cita:  
[www.VaxAbilities.com](http://www.VaxAbilities.com)**

