



THE SPECTRUM

AUGUST 2011

HOPING TO MAKE CHANGE

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The Autism Commission was established by Legislative Resolve and approved by Governor Patrick on April 22, 2010. It was charged to investigate and study the range of services and supports necessary for individuals on the autism spectrum (including Asperger's syndrome, high functioning autism, and pervasive developmental disorder) to achieve their full potential across the lifespan. The Commission consists of 31 members appointed by the Governor. I was asked to serve as a Co-Chair on the Transition Sub-committee along with many other incredible and devoted people; our mission is to find gaps and needs in the services for the age group of 14 to 22.

We started our monthly meetings at the State House in January 2011, the second Tuesday of every month. We began researching Massachusetts public and private schools focusing on best practices. This has been an immense responsibility. Our job is to give a report to the Commissioners who will then submit their recommendations to the governor. The majority of the sub-committee members are parents of children with ASD; people who know first hand the needs of this population.

We have worked diligently to come up with a report that hopefully will provide the Commissioners with the proper information that when implemented will allow students with ASD in Massachusetts to get the support and tools they need to go through the transition process, so that they can be ready when they graduate out of school to ensure a productive life whether they are going to a day program, to work, or to higher education.

Due to my position at the Autism Support Center throughout the years, I have had the opportunity to talk to hundreds of families looking for help, support and information; regardless of where the calls are from, every single parent longs for the best services for their child; the process is not easy, never mind the fact that parents are stressed out, feeling vulnerable, confused, and in many cases feeling that they are running out of time. As we all know the earlier that services are provided the best chances for a good outcome! Commonly we can see that in the more affluent communities' parents tend to have more services and supports while the less privileged communities have an arduous struggle to receive much needed services. We hope for change, we hope that in the future students with autism will attain the tools they need to succeed no matter where they are. We hope that from Springfield to Newton every single student with ASD has an equally comprehensive program that meets their needs.

I would like to thank everyone involved in this group; it has truly been a pleasure working with such a remarkable group of people! Throughout this process we put aside our differences and biases (if there were any) for a greater purpose; it has undoubtedly been an honor. Sincerely

Gloria Ricardi Castillo

ASC Co-Director



Transition Sub-committee at the State House, July 12

Back row: Marty Martini, Paula Grover, Kathy Kelly, Maureen O'Connell, Kathy Ohman
First Row: Carolyn Langer, Gloria Ricardi Castillo, Linda Tarmy, Janine Solomon, Elaine Gabovitch





Eli Hops

Playing For Hope

EVENT LOCATION:

The Center for Developmental Excellence

6 Southside Road

Danvers, MA 01923



David Herrera, Founder

Check [Eli Hops on Facebook](#) for frequent updates



DATE: AUGUST 14

11 AM TO 2 PM

Donation suggested
at the door.
Proceeds to benefit the
Autism Support Center

Are you in need of some real fun?

We have the event for you! David Herrera has called on his many contacts in the world of yo-yos, toys and games to offer an "expo"

which will be held at 6 Southside Road, Danvers. Drop in to see

professional yo-yo demonstrations, visit the many exhibitors, hear

some great music, take a chance on the raffle, and much, much

more! This is an event for the whole family!

Performers & vendors:

John Higby
2008 World Yo-Yo Champion and Guinness World Record holder

Brett "Ooch" Ouchcunis
A professional yo-yo entertainer

Eli Bailin
1990's yo-yo legend and inventor of the Eli Hop trick.

Fiske and Herrera
award winning local folk duo with 3 albums and radio airplay

VENDORS:

YoYoExpert.com

The best selection of yo-yos and tops on the internet

Yomega Yo-yo
Amazingly fun yo-yos and skill toys!

MadHat Music
Breathtaking custom made instruments!

Swagger String
Josh's Toys and Games -
Lil Lola Rose

handmade jewelry and trinkets
Lexi the Potter

Plectics Yo-yo

Nick Kessler

Yo-yo enthusiast and recycler inventor!



Check [Eli Hops on Facebook](#) for frequent updates

www.facebook.com/ellhopsforhope
978-994-3848

NortheastArc

Life-Long Support for People with Disabilities

ASC SUPPORT GROUPS

Acton

ASC Sponsored; Target Group: Mandarin-speaking parents.

Acton Memorial Library, 486 Main St (Rt. 27) Acton; bi-monthly meetings TBA

Parent facilitator: Wen Li

Contact ASC 978-777-9135 or asc@ne-arc.org

Danvers **ON HOLD TILL SEPTEMBER**

ASC sponsored; Target Group: Grandparents

6 Southside Road, Danvers; 3rd Mondays, 10-11:30 am

Contact facilitator Susan Gilroy 978-624-2302 or email sgilroy@ne-arc.org

Danvers **ON HOLD TILL SEPTEMBER**

ASC/AANE sponsored; Target Group: Adults (over 18) with Asperger's syndrome

6 Southside Road, Danvers; 3rd Wednesdays, 7-8:30 pm

Contact facilitator Gail Kastorf at 617-393-3824 ext. 42 or gail.kastorf@aane.org

Danvers

ASC/AANE sponsored; Target Group: Parents of Adults with Asperger's syndrome

6 Southside Road, Danvers;

Contact facilitator Gail Kastorf at 617-393-3824 ext. 42 or gail.kastorf@aane.org

Lawrence **ON HOLD TILL SEPTEMBER**

ASC sponsored; Target Group: Spanish-speaking parents of children with disabilities

Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, 700 Essex St, Lawrence; 3rd Friday, 9:30-11:30am

Contact facilitator Gloria Castillo 978-624-2301 or gcastillo@ne-arc.org

Lowell **ON HOLD TILL SEPTEMBER**

ASC sponsored; Target Group: Parents of children with ASD

DDS Lowell Area Office 325 Chelmsford St. Lowell; 1st Tuesday, 10:00 to 12:00

Contact facilitator Whitney Ryan 978-624-2305 or wryan@ne-arc.org

Newburyport **ON HOLD TILL SEPTEMBER**

ASC sponsored; Target Group: Parents of children with ASD

Newburyport Public Library, 94 State St, Newburyport; 2nd Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

Parent facilitator: Nancy Lucier

Contact ASC for more info 978-777-9135 or email ASC@ne-arc.org

Reading **ON HOLD TILL SEPTEMBER**

ASC sponsored; Target Group: Parents of children with ASD

Location: EMARC, 34 Gould Street, Reading, Date to be determined; at 7pm

Contact parent facilitator Kim Gargano 781-526-9171 or kimgargs@yahoo.com



TRANSITIONING BACK TO SCHOOL: 5 TIPS FOR PARENTS

Beginning a new school year is exciting and scary for parents and children alike. The transition is especially challenging for families with children on the autism spectrum. While change is difficult, keep these tips in mind to make the transition back to school a success.

1. Prepare your child for change.

The beginning of the school year brings many changes at once. Familiarize your child with anything new related to school as much as possible. This may mean bringing your child into their school or classroom, showing your child a picture of their teacher and any classmates, or even meeting the teacher before the first day of school.

2. Discuss the unexpected.

Parents cannot anticipate everything that will happen during a school day. Prepare your child for situations that may not go as planned. Talk about a plan of attack for free time, such as lunch and recess. Use social stories to familiarize your child with routines and how to behave when the unexpected happens.

3. Reintroduce routines.

Over summer vacation your child's morning and evening routines may have changed. They may be waking up and going to bed at different times. Start adjusting your child to the school year schedule and routine well before the school year actually begins.

4. Teach and review school related "hidden curriculum."

While many children may switch easily between the social demands of summer activities and those required in a classroom, children on the autism spectrum may need more explicit reminders. Go over the "dos and don'ts" of acceptable school behavior.

5. Prepare yourself for change.

Meet with teachers and administrators to discuss your child's strengths and challenges. Remember, you know and advocate for your child best. Establish communication early to develop positive relationships with your child's teacher and school.

For more information about autism and Asperger Syndrome check out the OAR Life Journey through Autism series at <http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/index.asp>



SOFT SKILLS FOR JOB SUCCESS

A new brief from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth), "**Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families,**" discusses the importance of "soft skills" for youth with disabilities in the workplace. Soft skills are common sense skills that employers have identified as being particularly important for work, such as teamwork, listening, and self-control. Written by PACER Center, the brief outlines several strategies that families can use to help youth develop these soft skills

http://www.ncwd-youth.info/sites/default/files/infobrief_issue28.pdf

HOW-TO GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN MASS.

The Boston Bar Association, with support from Children's Hospital Boston, has developed The Parents' How-to Guide to Children's Mental Health Services in Massachusetts, which answers all your questions and more. It takes you through the mental health system step by step, from deciding if your child needs care to getting specific services. http://www.bostonbar.org/theguide/bba_theguide_jan2009.pdf

FREE FUN FRIDAYS

The Highland Street Foundation provides Free Fun Fridays to Massachusetts residents and tourists. Visit select cultural attractions like the Museum of Science, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Franklin Park Zoo, and more, every Friday this summer with free admission. No registration or tickets required. Visit and enjoy! Go to the link below for a complete list of participating organizations and the specific dates they are free. http://www.highlandstreet.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=79

SENSORY-FRIENDLY MOVIES

Join AMC Theatres and the Autism Society special showings of the following movies. Movies will be shown at 10 a.m. local time in participating theatres nationwide.

August 6 - Smurfs

August 27 - Spy Kids 4 - All the Time in the World

AMC Dartmouth Mall 12, 140 North Dartmouth Mall North Dartmouth, Mass. 02747

AMC Framingham 15, 22 Flutie Pass, Framingham, Mass. 17014

AMC Tyngsboro 12, 440 Middlesex Road Tyngsboro, Mass. 01879

AMC Loews Methuen 20, 90 Pleasant Valley St. Methuen, Mass. 01844

AMC Theatres (AMC) and the Autism Society have teamed up to bring families affected by autism and other disabilities a special opportunity to enjoy their favorite films in a safe and accepting environment on a monthly basis with the "Sensory Friendly Films" program.

In order to provide a more accepting and comfortable setting for this unique audience, the movie auditoriums will have their lights brought up and the sound turned down, families will be able to bring in their own gluten-free, casein-free snacks, and no previews or advertisements will be shown before the movie. Additionally, audience members are welcome to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing - in other words, AMC's "Silence is Golden®" policy will not be enforced unless the safety of the audience is questioned.

Tickets are \$4-6 depending on location and can be purchased on the day of the event. **PLEASE CONTACT YOUR THEATRE TO CONFIRM SHOW TIMES AND PRICES.**

WORKING WITH YOUR HEALTH INSURER

10 Tips for Families with Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Information from the MA Family-to-Family Health Information Center

- 1) Read the materials you receive from your health plan or employer. These may include your service benefit plan, a directory of network providers and other supplementary information. Many private health insurers send periodic newsletters and health promotion materials. These may help you better understand your health benefits and maximize the services your family is entitled to receive.
- 2) Know your health plan's mission, vision and/or core values statements. These statements generally include phrases about providing members with affordable, accessible care, forming working partnerships, and ensuring a member's peace of mind. These statements can work to your advantage when you are advocating for a service and/or having problems getting a service covered. Frame your argument using the words your insurer has provided.
- 3) If your child has special health needs and requires more services than most children require, ask your insurer for a case manager or care coordinator. This is a free service and can provide a single "go to" person who can help you understand your benefits and make the referral or pre-approval process easier and faster.
- 4) Review every EOBs (Explanation of Benefits) you receive from your health insurer. Check for accuracy, the amounts paid and any co-payments you must pay. This is a good way to avoid billing inaccuracies. It is also a good way to make sure you are not paying for services your child did not receive or for services that your policy should cover.
- 5) When speaking with insurance customer service personnel or case managers, be polite. It is easier to build partnerships and get help when you're cooperative and pleasant; no one wants to help someone who is rude or disrespectful. Even if the person is not able to help you, offer your thanks.
- 6) Work your way up the ladder: If the customer service person or your case manager can't help you, ask to speak to the person who can, such as a supervisor or head of the department.
- 7) Keep a written record of calls and copies of all letters to your health insurer. Write down the names and numbers of the people you speak with and a short summary of your discussion. If you have a problem getting a service covered, it is more effective to say, "I spoke with Ms. Smith on February 1, 2011, and she approved" Rather than saying, "The last time I called I spoke with someone, she told me...."
- 8) Insurance companies look at the bottom line: what is this going to cost? Frame your requests in those terms, and in terms of "Medical Necessity." Your health plan will have a definition for "Medically Necessity" in the service benefit plan. For example, tell your insurer, "If you pay for speech and language therapy now, 52 visits a year will cost you \$XXX. If you don't provide this service, augmentative communication/assistive technology will cost you \$XXX in five years when this therapy is no longer an option for my child. RESOURCE: Read example letters of medical necessity at <http://www.medicalhomeportal.org/issue/writing-letters-of-medical-necessity>.



Continued on page 7

TIPS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

9) When you have exhausted the chain of command within your insurance company, you may be able to get help from the Office of Patient Protection (OPP). An ombudsman helps families understand their insurance benefits and work through external grievances. Note: OPP does not help with MassHealth. They provide assistance if your health plan is based in Massachusetts, fully insured, and your claim has been denied as "not medically necessary." To learn more about the OPP, call 1-800-436-7757 or visit <http://www.mass.gov/dph/opp>.

10) For additional help and more information contact:

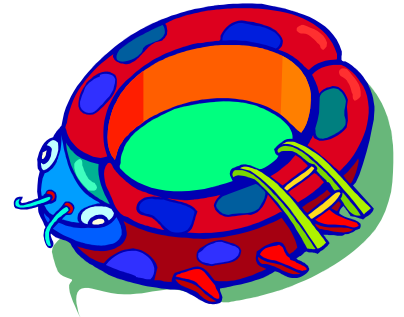
The Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Information Center

Federation for Children with Special needs

1-800-331-8688, ext. 301

www.massfamilyvoices.org

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Please keep us posted!!!

Are you moving?

Has your email address changed?

Contact us with any changes so you don't miss out on our events, workshops and announcements.

Call 978-777-9135 or email us at asc@ne-arc.org

FRANKLIN PARK ZOO EVENT

Dreamnight, a very special event held at Zoo New England's Franklin Park Zoo, is a special evening for chronically ill and disabled children to enjoy the Zoo with their families, free of charge.

Dreamnight will be held at Franklin Park Zoo in Boston on Sunday, August 21, 2011 from 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Dreamnight guests have the opportunity to get a more intimate view of the Zoo than the average daytime visitors through zookeeper talks and animal encounters. The evening will also feature activities, costumed characters, food and fun. Dreamnight is not open to the general public. This event is strictly for invited children and their families.

To register for this FREE event, please send an e-mail to Dreamnight@zoonewengland.com with the number of attendees and contact information, or call 617-989-2015.



TRAVEL WEBSITE

Vacations with a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder can be chaotic, nerve rattling and stressful! So stressful that many families do not take a vacation. Well, no more! Welcome to the site dedicated to helping your family travel, vacation and have fun!

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

DEBT CEILING

What was good news for Wall Street - "Stocks surge on budget deal", unfortunately is not necessarily good news in the short term for the disability community. ***We are waiting for specific news on the impact on Medicaid funding as Congress reaches an agreement to raise the debt ceiling and cut the deficit by \$2.4 trillion.***

The Arc of Massachusetts Government affairs Committee is recruiting for the 2012 legislative session. Our dates for meetings are below beginning at 9:30 am on Mondays at The Arc offices at 217 South St. Waltham.

Our agenda includes items such as budget advocacy- ranging from family support, Employment, Turning 22, and other accounts. Work on bills and policy and review of federal affairs. You are welcome to come to a meeting and try it out - without any commitment. You can also attend a few meetings a year to get grounded in the information and then stay connected via internet and phone conference.

We will announce in September or late August some dates for informational webinars as well with one key topic -Turning 22.

Please forward to friends and family. Email Beth Rutledge at Rutledge@arcmass.org (ext. 101 at 781-891-6270) if you are interested in attending a committee meeting.

September 12 (Labor Day on First Monday); October 10 (Children's Commission Meeting on First Monday); November 7; December 5

Leo V. Sarkissian, Executive Director, The Arc of Massachusetts, sarkissian@arcmass.org (781) 891-6270, 106



games!
friends!



activities!
fun!

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS

August 22nd - 26th 2011



Spotlight

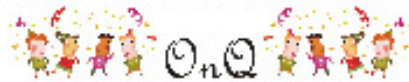


DRAMA-BASED SOCIAL PRAGMATICS FOR STUDENTS AGES 9 - 22 WITH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

Monday- Friday
9 am - 2 pm
\$600

AREAS OF FOCUS

- THEORY OF MIND
- GROUP INTERACTION
- INDEPENDENT CONVERSATION
- IDENTIFICATION OF FEELINGS
- STRESS COPING SKILLS
- BODY LANGUAGE
- RECEPTIVE NON-VERBAL CUES
- EYE CONTACT
- TONE OF VOICE



SOCIAL PRAGMATICS FOR CHILDREN AGES 6-10 WHO HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

Monday - Friday
9 am - 12 pm
\$375

AREAS OF FOCUS

- REGULATION OF EMOTION AND ENERGY LEVEL
- LISTENING AND OBSERVING
- APPROPRIATE RESPONSE AND REACTION
- ENGAGEMENT
- GROUP INTERACTION
- JOINT ATTENTION
- UNDERSTANDING SOMEONE ELSE'S PERSPECTIVE

Download an application at www.spotlightprogram.com

Or contact Rebecca Girard at 978-624-2314 or rgirard@ne-arc.org for more information

Spotlight and OnQ are programs of the Northeast Arc, 6 Southside Road, Danvers, MA 01923 978-624-2335 www.ne-arc.org www.spotlightprogram.com



NEW IN THE LIBRARY

Social Thinking at Work. Why should I care?

A Guidebook for Understanding and Navigating the Social Complexities of the Workplace

Authors, Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke, describe the inner workings of the social mind in the workplace and decode the hidden rules of the social world by explaining how we think about our own, as well as other people's thoughts and emotions. The process is complex and requires social multitasking to navigate the nuances and different mindsets of others, especially people you may perceive as being difficult to work with.



HOMEBASE PROGRAM STARTS AUGUST 1

HomeBASE Program for Families At-Risk and Experiencing Homelessness:

HomeBASE is a new housing program that will build upon the Emergency Assistance Flexible Funds program and other state initiatives to help families with children obtain and retain housing. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) officially will launch the program this Monday, August 1st, with the program rollout taking place over the next several weeks and months. The program will serve families already in Emergency Assistance (EA) shelters and motels, as well as new families. DHCD is implementing the program along with 11 regionally based HomeBASE providers from across the Commonwealth.

EA-eligible families will be assessed for two types of HomeBASE assistance. Eligible families can receive either:

- "Household assistance" of up to \$4,000/per year to help the family stay in place or relocate. Funds can be used flexibly to cover such needs as rental arrearage payments, security deposits, payments to host families, and medical bill assistance; OR
- "Rental assistance" to provide an ongoing monthly rental subsidy. Families will pay 35% of their income towards rent and utilities in approved rental units, with the HomeBASE subsidy covering the balance. Families in compliance with their housing stabilization plans will have the opportunity to continue in the program for up to 36 months.

In addition, families who are eligible for HomeBASE and are in need of immediate shelter will be placed in temporary accommodations while waiting to use the other HomeBASE benefits.

Kelly Turley, kelly@mahomeless.org 781-595-7570 x17

For more information, contact DHCD at 1-877-418-3308.

Check our website!

www.NE-arcAutismSupportCenter.org

AUTISM SUPPORT CENTER

Center for Developmental Excellence
6 Southside Road
Danvers, MA 01923

Phone: 978-777-9135
E-mail: asc@ne-arc.org



The Autism Support Center is celebrating 20 years of supporting and empowering families in northeastern Massachusetts.

THE SPECTRUM

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978-777-9135 or 800-7-AUTISM (in Eastern MA)

E-mail: asc@ne-arc.org

www.ne-arc-autism-support-center.org

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Anyone wishing to contribute information for this newsletter should send it to asc@ne-arc.org or to our mailing address above. Parent contribu-

tions are encouraged. *Announcements are included as space is available.*

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Susan Gilroy, Editor

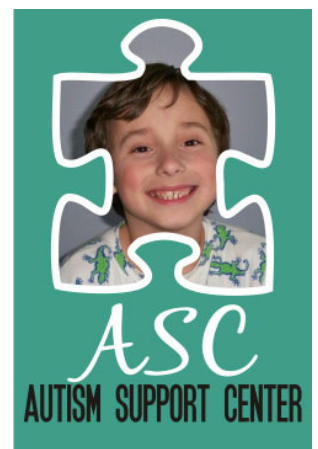
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NortheastArc
Life-Long Support for People with Disabilities

