

Maine Parent Federation
PO Box 2067
Augusta, Maine
04338-2067

Web: www.mpf.org

Email: parentconnect@mpf.org

Online Community:
www.startingpointsforme.org

Central Office is located at:
484 Maine Avenue, Suite 1
Farmingdale, Maine
04344

(207) 588-1933
1-800-870-7746 (Statewide)
Fax: (207) 588-1938

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Parent Connection

Since 1984 because every family matters

Winter 2011 - Published Quarterly



Check Out Our Fundraising Events!

Dear Readers,

As you may know, Maine Parent Federation lost a significant amount of funding due to state and federal budget cuts. You can help us cover some of this loss by participating in one of our fundraising activities. Who knows, you might even win \$2,000!

\$2,000 Raffle - Donate \$20 to MPF and your name will be entered into our raffle, \$2,000 CASH to the winner. Only 600 entry forms are available so don't miss out! You can donate online through PayPal @www.mpf.org. Click on raffle. The drawing will be held on December 15 and the winner will be notified by telephone.

Candle and Wreath Sales - We are selling holiday wreaths and Castine Candles in a variety of scents. The wreaths are 22" and 2-sided. Plain wreaths are \$10 and decorated wreaths are \$15. Candles are \$12. They can be picked up at our Farmingdale office at 484 Maine Avenue. We may be able to arrange for delivery of larger orders.

Rummage Sale - On Saturday, December 3 we are having a rummage sale with household and miscellaneous items, office furniture, baked goods, hot dogs, and soda. Wreaths and raffle tickets will be available during the sale. Please contact us if you would like to rent a table for the rummage sale.

Online Auction - We will be holding an online auction in early 2012. We have a large variety of items that have been donated for the auction. Visit our website to learn more about the auction. Updates will be posted soon.

Talent Show - Do you have talent you would like to show off? We are having a Talent Showcase on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2012 at the Augusta Armory. Auditions will be held on December 4 and 5. Watch for the announcement on our website. Don Brown from Blueberry Broadcasting (WABK) will be Master of Ceremonies at the show. Bring your sweetie and spend an enjoyable evening watching local talent perform and buy valentine treats while supporting a great cause! Tickets will be available in January.

Swing into Spring Dance: Date and location to be announced but it is guaranteed to be lots of fun. Check our website for updates.

For more information on any of our events, call the office at 1-800-870-7746 or check our website at www.mpf.org.

Thank you for your support!

Janice



University of Maine Research Project

Are you raising a youngster with autism or developmental disabilities? I am a professor at the University of Maine and my research project seeks to learn more about **your** experiences, concerns, and needs.

What does the project involve?

You will be asked to fill out a few questionnaires and participate in an interview about your child's abilities and your needs and concerns.

Where and when does the project take place?

Interviews are scheduled at your convenience and can be conducted in your home, at the Conley Speech, Language, and Hearing Center on the University of Maine campus, or at another quiet location of your choice.

How do I sign up?

Feel free to contact me by telephone or email: Nancy E. Hall, Project Director
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, University of Maine at Orono, 207-581-2404 or email nhall@maine.edu.



Maine Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities welcomes your comments:

The Maine Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities provides policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in Maine. The Council advises and assists the Department of Education (DOE) regarding the provision of appropriate services for children aged birth through twenty.

The Council holds monthly meetings that are open to the public. The Council encourages **public comment** on issues, concerns, activities, or recommendations. For more information or to provide comment via email go to: www.maine.gov/education/spced/macecdhome.html



New & Updated Information Packets

Maine Parent Federation has informational packets available on more than 200 topics. These packets contain researched information, tips, local and national resources, and a list of related lending library material available here at MPF. The following information packets have recently been updated:

Disability / Disorder Related Topics:

- Learning Disabilities
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Tourette Syndrome

Education Related Topics:

- Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Related Services
- Transition: Graduation and Beyond

General Topics:

- Advocacy
- Charter Schools

.... and many more!!!!

If you would like to receive any of our information packets or would like information on another topic, please contact MPF by:

- Phone: **1-800-870-7746**
(Ask to speak with a Parent Information Specialist)
- Email: **parentconnect@mpf.org**
(Please provide mailing information)

These materials are offered *free* of charge!



Check it out!

We have some of the most requested Information Packets available on our **NEW** online community at:

www.startingpointsforme.org

(Information packets are located under publications!)

Maine Department of Education Parent Survey

- **Does your school / CDS site facilitate parent involvement in your child’s special education services?**
- **Have your child’s Early Intervention Services (EIS) helped your family know your rights and effectively communicate your child’s needs? Have they helped your child develop and learn?**

Maine Parent Federation (MPF) is partnering with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) to survey parents in select school districts on these topics. This is a valuable opportunity for parents to provide feedback to MDOE.

If you receive a survey postcard from us in the mail in mid January 2012, please take a few minutes to respond – online or by phone. Your input provides important guidance to MDOE on how schools, CDS and EIS facilitate your involvement in your child’s services.

The survey will close February 8, 2012. Thank you for your survey participation.

Please contact MPF and ask to speak with a Parent Information Specialist if you have any questions:

- Telephone: 1-800-870-7746 (Statewide) or 207-588-1933 (Local)
- Email: parentconnect@mpf.org.

The following list of schools and CDS sites are being surveyed for 2011 – 2012:

AOS 43 (MSAD 31 only)	AOS 48	AOS 94
AOS 95	AOS 96	AOS 99
Bangor	Brewer	Greenbush
Hermon	MSAD 45	MSAD 59
MSAD 65	RSU 13	RSU 15
RSU 17	RSU 49	RSU 55
South Portland	Union 69	

CDS Sites:

Aroostook County CDS	CDS Reach	Five Town CDS
Opportunities CDS	Two Rivers CDS	

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Information contained in this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the views of MPF, nor does it imply endorsement of a product or service.



Do you have questions about...

- * Special Education
- * Transition
- * MPF Resources



- * Learning Styles
- * Behavior
- * Communication

Are you a Parent or Professional looking for answers?

Check out what **Maine Parent Federation** has to offer.

We are here to help!

Workshops:

Communication

- Can You Hear Me Now?
- Making Peace With Conflict:
Weathering the Storm

Learning Styles

- Great Minds Don't Think Alike!

Special Education

- Special Education: *The 3 R's: Rights, Responsibilities and Results*
- Developing IEP's: *A Step-By-Step Guide*
- Transition to Kindergarten: *A Natural Progression*
- Special Education: *Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*

Challenging Behaviors and Positive Supports

- Why Can't Johnny B. Goode at *School?*
- Why Can't Johnny B. Goode at *Home?*

Transitions

(for parents of youth with disabilities ages 14-25)

- From Advocacy to Self-Advocacy:
Moving On and Letting Go
- Transition from High School: *Taking Flight*

MPF Resources

- Maine Parent Federation (MPF) Overview

These workshops were developed with the interests and needs of families of children with special needs and disabilities in mind. Providers and educators who work with families can also benefit from these workshops.

All of our workshops are two hours in length (with the exception of the MPF Overview, which is 1.5 hrs). We are happy to adjust the presentation time to meet your needs. We travel to your location days, evenings, or weekends.

Workshop Fees:

Workshop Fees for Parents:

There is no charge for parents or parent groups.

Workshop Fees for Agencies, Providers, or Professional Groups:

There is a minimum \$100.00 fee unless otherwise noted.

***Fee is waived if parents are invited to attend the workshop or an additional workshop is scheduled for parents.*

If you, your group, school, agency, or organization is interested in scheduling a workshop or would like more information about our workshops, please contact us at:

1-800-870-7746 (Statewide) or 207-588-1933, Email: parentconnect@mpf.org

Website: www.mpf.org Online Community: www.startingpointsforme.org

Check Out These Two Ways to Access Low-Cost Internet Service!

Comcast and Great Works Internet (GWI) are currently offering low-cost Internet services to Maine families with varying requirements.

Comcast offers low-cost Internet services and low-cost computers to families whose children qualify for or receive free school lunches through the National School Lunch Program. Families can sign up for Internet Essentials, which provides high-speed Internet access for \$9.95 a month. Parents can also purchase a Netbook for \$149.95.

To qualify for the \$9.95 a month Internet service and a low-cost computer, ***your household must meet all these criteria:***

- Be located where Comcast offers Internet service. In Maine this includes Berwick, South Berwick, Eliot and Kittery, and the Brunswick and Freeport areas
- Have at least one child receiving free school lunches through the National School Lunch Program
- Have not subscribed to Comcast Internet service within the last 90 days
- Not have an overdue Comcast bill or unreturned equipment

For more information call, 1-855-8-INTERNET (1-855-846-8376) or visit Comcast Internet Essentials at <http://internetessentials.com/>.

Great Works Internet (GWI) and the Maine Learning Technology Foundation is also offering free dial-up home internet access for 7th and 8th grade students (or high school students if you are a Maine Learning Technology Initiative 1:1 high school) who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

For more information on this program, visit <http://maine.gov/mlti/parent/home-internet-access.shtml>.

NEWS from Region 2 . . .

Waldo, Lincoln, Knox, Sagadahoc Counties
and the Brunswick Area
Beth Jones, Regional Support Coordinator
207-623-8523 – bjones@mpf.org

Midcoast Transition meetings at Brunswick High School are scheduled on the first Tuesday of each month, 6-8PM. Please check with Beth regarding the month of January, as the date has not been confirmed. Our December meeting will address social opportunities and community engagement of youth and adults with disabilities. Topics planned for the following months include financial planning and trusts, post-secondary education, and guardianship. If you are an interested family member, caregiver, provider, or general or special education teacher, please contact Beth for more information.

Knox Waldo Area Meeting on Guardianship is scheduled for Thursday, December 1, from 6-8 PM, at Broadreach Family and Community Services in Belfast. This meeting is open to parents, family members, guardians, teachers, and providers. Please check with Beth regarding this group's plans for meetings in 2012.

A Damariscotta Area Informal Support Parent Training is being planned. If you are a parent, foster parent or grandparent raising children with special needs who is interested in mentoring parents, please consider this volunteer position with us. Reimbursement for travel, company with like-minded people, and a lovely lunch are offered to trainees. Please contact Beth for more information.

On-going GEAR Parent Support Groups and Trainings for families in emotional-behavioral or mental health spectrums are scheduled in Bath, Damariscotta, and the Rockland areas through GEAR. Please contact Beth or Norm LeBlanc at nleblanc@crisisandcounseling.org, 721-0161, or 1-800-264-9224 for more information.

Maine Housing and Quality Services Coalition meets on the second Monday of each month from Noon to 2 PM. This coalition of veteran parents, providers, DHHS staff, attorneys, and state representatives meets in Portland for pizza, great information from invited speakers, and meaningful, working dialogue about long-term, comprehensive planning for adults and transitioning youth with special needs. Please contact Beth or Cullen Ryan at cullen@chomhousing.org for more information.

New Publication

MPF is pleased to let you know about a new publication called *EZ AT 2: Simple Assistive Technology Ideas for Children Ages Birth to Three – A Guide for Increasing Young Children’s Participation in Daily Activities and Routines*. This publication was developed by PACER Center in collaboration with Tots-n-Tech, a federally funded research institute focused on research, training, and implementation of assistive technology (AT) with infants and toddlers.

This guide is designed for parents and professionals who want to help infants and toddlers age birth to three who have disabilities to participate more fully in daily activities by the use of assistive technology.

This publication can be accessed at <http://www.pacer.org/stc/pubs/EZ-AT-book-2011-final.pdf>. We have a limited number of hard copies available and would be happy to send you one (*while supplies last*). To receive a copy, call Maine Parent Federation at 1-800-870-7746 or Email parentconnect@mpf.org.

PACER also has a publication available for children ages 3-8 entitled EZ AT. This publication is available at <http://www.pacer.org/stc/pubs/ezat.pdf>.

Starting POINTS for Maine Parents

Maine Parent Federation’s (MPF) Starting POINTS for Maine Parents is an online community for families of children with disabilities. This online resource offers print publications, online trainings, and an assortment of state and national resources. There is a Parent Perspectives section of the website where parents can interact with one another. MPF is constantly adding new information to this site. We recently added videos on:

- Abbreviated and shortened school days
- Risk Assessment

- The Importance of Youth Voice
- Section 504 and Education
- Suspension and Expulsion
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Functional Behavioral Assessments and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Resource Families

You can find all of these resources and many more when you visit www.startingpointsforme.org

Procedural Safeguards

Maine Parent Federation now offers a new self-guided learning tool for parents and providers on Special Education Procedural Safeguards.

This tool was developed, in part, by P³, a Parent Program Partnership between the Learning Disabilities Association of Maine, Maine Parent Federation, and Southern Maine Parent Awareness. The Procedural Safeguards Notice outlines all of the protections a parent or child receives under the special education regulations. We have taken this legal jargon and put the information into user friendly videos and fact sheets that parents and providers can refer to when trying to navigate a parent’s or student’s rights. We have many experts in the field appearing in some of our videos including Diane Howard from the Disability Rights Center, Tim Luff, Special Education Director for the Oxford Hills School District, Dominic DePatsy, Director of Instructional Support for RSU 5, and Dick O’Meara, Attorney, from Murray, Plumb, and Murray.

All of these videos, fact sheets, and resources can be found at www.startingpointsforme.org in the online training section.

Update on Wraparound Maine

Due to budget shortfalls the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) was requested to make 22.5 million in cuts beginning July 1, 2012. One of the possible cuts was the elimination of the *Wraparound Maine program*. This recommendation went to the Governor's Streamlining and Prioritizing Government Task force for consideration. On November 8 this Task Force voted to cut the funding in half rather than eliminate it for the next contract year, beginning July 1, 2012. Below is an action alert that went out prior to that decision that provides a summary of this service. Stay tuned for updates as our state partners along with recommendations from Wraparound providers make plans for how to implement the service with the reduced funding.

Thank you for all of your efforts to keep this important service in place for families and children!

Closure of Wraparound Maine will cost the state financially.

What is Wraparound?

What does Wraparound do for the State of Maine?

Wraparound is an effective team-based community intervention planning process intended to provide coordinated, holistic, family-driven care to meet the complex needs of children and youth who are involved with multiple systems, at risk of placement in institutional settings, and/or experiencing serious emotional or behavioral difficulties.

Wraparound Maine serves all counties in the state of Maine, working with the departments of corrections, child welfare and child behavioral health services and department of education as well as local medical/mental health clinics. In Maine, the results indicate a 28% reduction in an overall average per child for mental health expenditures which saved the State \$2,214,798.

Investment in Wraparound is backed by controlled research.

Fiscally conserving states in Texas and Minnesota are *expanding* their Wraparound program *because of realized cost savings*.

States who have *discontinued* Wraparound have experienced *increased* costs for youths, e.g.:

- In Alaska, following 24 months of Wraparound closure, the costs of service *exceeded the cost of Wraparound over 75%*;
- When Washington state eliminated Wraparound programs the result was an increase of placement costs to the point where the *state reinstated the program in 2000*.

Student suspensions from school *decrease by nearly 50%* statewide.

2/3rd of youth involved in Wraparound are at or above average in their school performance which has resulted in *increased graduation rates* and academic achievement.

81% of youth discharged from Wraparound remain in the community and are not reliant on state funded services.

FMI: The National Wraparound Initiative (NWI): www.nwi.pdx.edu