A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What a difference a year can make! We have all endured what has been a very long and hard year. We hope you can find some time to rest and relax during the upcoming summer months. We are aware that there will be a lot of preparations for what will hopefully be full in-person learning for as many students as possible, and we are here to assist you with those needs.

Maine Parent Federation is excited to welcome two new staff members to our team; Allison Wiest – Parent Trainer for Central and Southern Maine Amanda Peters – Parent Information Specialist

Both Allison and Amanda will be using this summer to get fully trained on all of our programming. They are both already very knowledgeable and will be a tremendous asset to our agency.

Keep your eyes on the MPF website. We hope to launch our new site in the summer of 2021. We are very excited about this, as it will be easier to navigate and provide many more resources to families and providers.

As the mandates are being lifted MPF will be transitioning back to more in-person services this fall. Our peer-to-peer assistance will resume the ability to meet face to face with families but can still provide virtual support based on the family needs. We will also be offering our trainings in-person but will also be offering virtual and recorded options. We will resume our in-person Annual Conference in the spring of 2022 and we hope to be able to offer in-person Transition Resource Fairs for young adults.

With the legislative session coming to a close MPF is closely monitoring bills, which are due for a full legislature vote and approval by the Governor:

- LD#552 An Act to Strengthen the Individualized Education Program Process
- LD#1373 An Act to Keep All Maine Students Safe by Restricting the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Schools
- LD#1712 Act to Support Children’s Healthy Development and School Success. Also, it is anticipated that Maine’s Unified Special Education Regulations will be opened for changes sometime this spring.

We have also been made aware that the Maine Department of Education this summer will be issuing a full repeal and replace of the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations. This process will be a 6-month process and will roll into the next legislative session. We will keep you updated on this very important issue and how it will impact your family.

Please continue to watch our website and social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube for current and updated information and as always, please reach out to MPF with any questions or concerns.

Kind Regards,

Carrie Woodcock; Executive Director
What's New in the Information Center at MPF?

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:

- Developmental Delay
- Early Intervention
- Parenting
- Sexual Health

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

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

These materials are offered free of charge!

Family Support Navigator Program

Maine Parent Federation has trained Family Support Navigators (FSN) that can help support your family at no cost to you! A FSN is an experienced parent who lives in your area and is available for 1:1 peer support.

During the COVID-19 pandemic all peer support is being offered via email, phone, texts, and through online platforms such as Zoom to support social distancing and keep all families safe.

A FSN can help you:

- Organize your paperwork.
- Interview a prospective service provider.
- Prepare for a meeting with your child’s doctor, school, or service provider.
- Provide support at an IEP meeting.
- Locate resources in your area.

To learn more about the FSN program, visit our website at www.mpf.org or call us at (800) 870-7746.

We are currently accepting referrals to the program. If you are a parent that needs peer support, know of a family that needs help, or would like to learn how you can become a Navigator, please contact the Regional Family Support Coordinator in your county for more information:

Androscoggin, Cumberland, Franklin, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo and York
Deborah Newcombe, (800) 870-7746, dnewcombe@mpf.org

Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, and Washington
Robin Levesque, (207) 538-0866, rlevesque@mpf.org
SRC Announcement of Meetings/Recruitment of Members

The Maine State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) wants your input!

The SRC is a statewide citizens group created to advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in Maine about how well its programs and services match the needs of people with disabilities.

The council meets monthly and invites you, as members of the public, to attend. The meetings are all being held virtually through Zoom at this time. A meeting link can be obtained by contacting the SRC through the webpage listed below. (Otherwise, meetings are held at the Department of Labor in Augusta.) All meetings take place on the third Monday of the month from 1-3 PM.

The SRC is actively looking to recruit more members to represent the voices of those impacted by disability. Please visit www.mainesrc.org for more information.

MPF Workshops & Virtual Trainings 2021

If you are interested in scheduling a workshop or need more information, please contact MPF at 800-870-7746 (statewide) or email parentconnect@mpf.org. Due to the many requests we receive for our workshops, we respectfully request that you give us at least 30 days’ notice to schedule. We will make every attempt to reasonably accommodate all requests. Please note: Registrations of less than 5 may require cancellation or rescheduling of the workshop.

MPF Dental Health: Guidance for Parents of Children with Disabilities or Special Healthcare Needs

This workshop was created in collaboration with Partnership for Children’s Oral Health (PCOH), and University of New England College of Dental Medicine.

Dental Hygiene is important for a healthy smile, and healthy mouth. This workshop was designed for parents of children with disabilities or special healthcare needs to discuss brushing challenges and accommodations, options to prepare for the dental visit home, as well as providing useful resources for parents.

Education is Special: A Guide to Special Education in Maine
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y8BglU4py3
Special education in Maine (or anywhere) can be a complex and confusing system to navigate. Many parents feel overwhelmed by the various rules and regulations, as well as the vocabulary that is used. Maine Parent Federation has developed this virtual workshop as a resource to help explain the process of special education and empower families to be active participants in their children’s education.

Healthy Eating: Guidance for Parent of Children with Disabilities or Special Healthcare Needs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOlw5znxK3Q
Nutritious food is essential for a child to grow and learn. This workshop was designed for parents to discuss barriers to healthy eating habits, how to respond to common mealtimes challenges, and how to incorporate nutrition goals across all plans.

Katie Beckett Waiver Program: A Step-by-Step Guide to Apply for Benefits
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMXPCITpmrs
The Katie Beckett waiver is an option for children with serious health conditions. It allows access to full MaineCare benefits to individuals who may not qualify otherwise. Maine Parent Federation has developed this training to guide parents through the application process, and what to expect along the way.
**Supported Decision Making: Exploring Alternatives to Guardianship**
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kS1DQHcsqvU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kS1DQHcsqvU)
Supported Decision Making is one of the many alternatives to Guardianship. As of September 2019, the probate code (the law that oversees Guardianship) was changed for the first time in decades. This webinar explores what the changes implemented in September 2019 mean for your family. Obtaining guardianship is a legal process where an individual is stripped of their rights, and another individual can now legally make their decisions. This option is not right for all families, and other options should be explored first.

**Self-Advocacy: Finding Your Voice (Youth Workshop)**
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2wKdO5Y6uOY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2wKdO5Y6uOY)
Self-Advocacy is one of the most important skills a young person can have. Self-Advocacy is the act of speaking up for yourself in order to receive what you need or want. Self-Advocacy is also understanding yourself and communicating your dreams and goals in life. This workshop is designed to help young people with disabilities or special healthcare recognize the importance of self-advocacy, and provide youth with tips to become better self-advocates.

**SMART Goals: For Individualized Education Programs**
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxQJ5tyRUES](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxQJ5tyRUES)
S.M.A.R.T. Goals is an acronym, which is helpful in constructing meaningful and achievable goals.
- S - Specific
- M - Measurable
- A - Attainable
- R - Results-Oriented
- T - Time-Based
We can apply this framework to the process of developing IEP goals to ensure student’s education programs are appropriate to help

**Transition from High School: Looking Beyond the High School Years**
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x68bkxd6_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x68bkxd6_o)
The transition from high school into the world of adulthood is a milestone for ALL young people. There are so many possibilities as youth dream and plan for their future! For young people with disabilities, this can also mean challenges when continuing education, seeking employment, and living independently. This workshop explores the importance of planning early for life after high school with an emphasis on person-centered planning.

**Transition to Kindergarten: Guidance for Parent of Children with Disabilities or Special Healthcare Needs**
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwn7QlxLeCk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwn7QlxLeCk)
The transition to kindergarten is a big deal! Kindergarten is a sign that your child is growing and increasing their independence. While it is an exciting time, it can also be a time filled with many unknowns. This workshop maps out the process of the transition and provides tools and tips to help parents become active members of the IEP team.

**Maine Parent Federation Overview:**
Programs and Services offered by MPF
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq9hr3O25wk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq9hr3O25wk)
MPF is a private non-profit organization. MPF provides information, referral, one on one telephone support, and training to parents of children with disabilities or special health care needs and the professionals who work with these families through numerous grant-funded projects. Our services are offered at no cost to parents and are available statewide.
Why gardening is a valuable activity for kids: 25 ways it benefits them

Source: Get the Kids Outside

Gardening is a valuable activity that benefits kids in many ways, helping them grow alongside the plants they care for.

Kids love to dig in the dirt and watch things grow so gardening is a great activity for them. But in addition to dirt under their nails, kids can gain so much from gardening — physically, intellectually, and emotionally. Introducing kids to the joy and benefits of gardening from an early age will help them in ways that you may not have anticipated.

The basics are: plant a seed, watch it grow. But along the way, children can learn new skills and develop physically, intellectually and emotionally, all while enjoying every step of the process.

HOW GARDENING BENEFITS KIDS

So in what ways does gardening benefit a child?

PHYSICALLY

1. **It helps with fine motor skills.**
   As children involve themselves in sowing seeds, thinning plants, weeding, pruning and harvesting, they are helping develop their fine motor skills.

2. **It helps kids practice locomotor skills.**
   Children naturally work on locomotor skills as they move around the garden while weeding, watering, and sowing.

3. **It helps with body management skills.**
   Gardening may involve carrying watering cans, moving soil, carrying tools, bending over to weed, squatting to plant a seedling, all of which help with their body management skills.

4. **It helps with object control skills.**
   Using gardening tools such as spades, trowels, hoes, rakes, hoses and watering cans will help them with object control skills in other areas of their life.

5. **It provides sensory stimulation.**
   Gardening involves all five senses:
   - **feeling** the temperatures and textures around them (wet dirt, soft soil, fuzzy leaves, chunky mulch, warm sun)
   - **smelling** the different scents around them (fresh dirt, warm plants, fragrant flowers)
   - **seeing** the multitude of colors (blue sky, brown soil, green plants, colorful flowers)
   - **hearing** the nature sounds around them (water splashing, birds chirping, leaves rustling, wind blowing)
   - **tasting** the fruits of their labor (edible gardens are very rewarding)

6. **It encourages fresh air and exercise.**
   Gardening gives kids a task to do outside, brings them into the fresh air, gets them moving, and gives them a good dose of Vitamin D.

7. **It teaches kids about nutrition and encourages them to make healthy choices.**
   Children are more apt to try a new fruit or vegetable if they’ve worked hard to help it grow. Growing their own fruits, vegetables and herbs exposes them to nutritious choices that can help set up life-long habits.

8. **It involves getting dirty, which may strengthen their immunity and overall health.**
   Digging in the dirt can expose children to everyday germs/microbes, which in turn can help them build a strong, healthy immune system.

INTELLECTUALLY

9. **It involves scientific observations and queries.**
   Children may be led to ask questions based on what they observe: why something is growing well or not well, the importance of sunlight and water, etc.
10. **It helps them learn to plan and organize.**
Being involved in the planning and organizing from the start can help kids feel more invested in their garden.

11. **It involves mathematics.**
Children will use mathematics in gardening without even realizing it! Gardening involves counting seeds, measuring and calculating plant spacing, measuring how much the plants grow, etc.

12. **It teaches them new vocabulary.**
While gardening, children are exposed to new words that they may not otherwise use in their daily life: soil, compost, till, sow, aerate, germinate, moisten, etc. They will also learn the names of plants they are working with.

13. **It teaches different plant species.**
Their hands-on experience in the garden will help children learn to recognize different plants based on their size, leaf shape, flowers, and fruit.

14. **It teaches plants’ growth cycles.**
While working in the garden from one season to another, children can witness the full life cycle of plants. They can observe the progression from seed to seedling to mature plant to flower to fruit and back to seed again.

15. **It teaches cause/effect.**
Children will start to notice different examples of cause/effect in their garden, such as the effects of sunlight, watering, fertilizing, weeding, and thinning.

**EMOTIONALLY**

16. **It teaches responsibility.**
Plants need regular and consistent care, and children learn what it means to be responsible for something to help ensure it health.

17. **It teaches patience.**
At a time when many things in their lives are immediate and instant gratification is common, children will practice patience as they wait for the seeds to sprout, the plants to grow, the flowers to bloom, the fruits and vegetables to ripen.

18. **It helps foster respect and admiration for the importance of farmers.**
As children see the amount of work and dedication that is necessary to help plants grow, they may increase in respect and admiration for the work that farmers do every day, year in and year out.

19. **Digging in dirt can make kids happier and more relaxed.**
Studies have shown that when kids have direct contact with dirt and mud, it can help improve their mood and reduce anxiety.

**WHY KIDS ENJOY GARDENING**

For kids, the above benefits aren’t necessarily what makes gardening interesting. So what is it about digging in the soil and tending a garden that they enjoy?

20. **They love to play in the dirt!**

21. **They love to watch things grow.**

22. **It makes them feel good.**

23. **It gives them self-confidence and a sense of purpose.** (They see that their efforts produce results.)

24. **It helps them relax.**

25. **They feel satisfaction in learning a new life skill.**
Gardening goes beyond the basics of seed + soil = plant and is valuable activity for kids to enjoy outside. Along the way, they’ll enjoy unanticipated benefits and develop alongside the plants they are caring for. So let’s get outside and grow something together!

*Garden Planner*
Maine Youth Chat is a virtual networking opportunity for youth and young adults (14-26) with disabilities and special healthcare needs to hangout, build skills, and learn about opportunities within the group and community.

Meetings happen twice monthly on Tuesdays at 4pm. **No meetings in July.**

Please Contact Dylan Campbell, dcampbell@mpf.org for more information.

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**YOUTH SURVIVORS NETWORK**

A virtual networking opportunity for youth and young adults with brain injuries in Maine and New Hampshire to share their experiences and build a community of self-advocates.

Contact Dylan Campbell for more information, dcampbell@mpf.org
for Special Needs Parents

- Prepare your child for changes in routine.
- Be sure all caregivers have an instruction list of child’s medications, equipment use, allergies, possible trigger/concerns, etc.
- Post a list of emergency contacts and first responders.
- Review child’s medications regarding exposure to sun, heat, and pool chemicals, etc.
- Always be sure the child is supervised near open water and open outside spaces.
- When using lifejackets or other water safety devices, make sure they are in good condition and fit well.
- Be sensitive to your child’s travel limitations, prepare in advance.
- When traveling remember favorite toys, fidgets, activities, etc.
- Pack a First-Aid kit, insect repellent, and a good sunscreen.
- Don’t forget medical alert bracelets, especially when traveling.

- Build an obstacle course outside using hula-hoops, empty boxes, and lawn furniture.
- Use laundry baskets to play Frisbee golf
- Read books on a specific topic such as stargazing or catching fireflies and then do it.
- Pick wild flowers and give the bouquet to someone to make them smile.
- Visit a farmer’s market, and try something new.
- Paint kind messages on rocks and leave them around your neighborhood.
- Put up a bird feeder and keep a list of the different kind of birds that visit.
- Make a scrapbook of leafs and flowers that your child finds outside.
- Spray an outside table (or bin) with shaving cream and let your kids smear it around using trucks, plastic spoons or other favorite toys.
- Fossil find: take a trip to the beach or use an outside sandbox and bury some fossils (a.k.a. painted rocks) provide your child with a small shovel and bucket to search. After fossils have been recovered use them to count or group by color etc.
- Fly a kite.
- Go camping in the backyard.
- Set up an outdoor movie night.

*Let your imagination run wild and have a wonderful time!*
NERGG, Inc. is offering a new sponsored speaker series. The first event was held May 16th on Long Term Management of Morquio A Syndrome. For more information, contact Kimberlee Harrison at kiharrison@bmrn.com.

Rare New England is launching a new program beginning in June on Virtual Patient & Caregiver Support Groups. Click here to learn more: https://rarenewengland.org/rare-connections-support-groups.

Jackson Laboratory (CT), Shriners Hospitals and others announced a research affiliation to discover causes of Cerebral Palsy, the most common motor disability in childhood. https://www.jax.org/news-and-insights/2021/april/shriners-and-jax-announce-research-affiliation?mc_cid=3fe75a9659&mc_eid=ee3db72577

NERGN was recently reintroduced to Angel Flight Northeast. Requests from people with rare and ultra rare diseases have been on the rise, so they are raising awareness about this service. Angel Flight NE has been flying families to life-saving medical care for over 25 years! http://www.angelflightne.org/?mc_cid=3fe75a9659&mc_eid=ee3db72577.

Bullying: When Your Child is the Target – This book gives parents the practical tools they need to help their kids move from victims to victors.

The Common Sense Guide to Your Child’s Special Needs: When to Worry, When to Wait, What to Do – Learn what to do next when your child struggles with speech and language development, motor skills, social skills, behavior control, learning, cognitive development, and more.

Don’t Let Your Emotions Run Your Life: For Teens – Offers behavior therapy skills to help you manage mood swings, control angry outbursts, and get along with others.

Going Solo While Raising Children with Disabilities – If you are raising a child with disabilities on your own, you’ll find a wealth of support, affirmation, and practical ideas in this book.

A Guide to Collaboration for IEP Teams – This will help administrators, teachers, parents, and others work together to design, review, and modify IEPs and are supplemented with checklists, diagrams, examples, and more.

Parenting Children with Health Issues and Special Needs – Practical techniques to help ADHD, allergies, Autism, behavior problems, Cystic Fibrosis, developmental delays, diabetes, and more.

Show Me Your MAD Face – Learn ways to teach children how to feel angry without losing control.

The complete library list is available on our website: www.mpf.org

To borrow any of these books, E-mail dnewcombe@mpf.org, or call (800) 870-7746.