



Maine Parent Federation
 Since 1984 . . . because every family matters

Parent Connection

Spring 2020

A Note from the Executive Director . . .

Spring is just around the corner; okay I know we live in Maine but it is nice to be writing my spring newsletter! With the hopes of warmer weather spring also brings an increase in special education planning for our families. MPF is available to assist families with their educational needs as they begin planning for the next school year.

We are busy with the final preparations for our Annual **Free** Conference in collaboration with GEAR Parent Network. This year's conference is Saturday, March 14th at Governor Hill Mansion in Augusta. Our theme is *Peer Support: It Takes a Village*. We are excited to welcome our keynote speaker Jake Shumbo. Jake is a young adult who experienced a traumatic brain injury and will share his message of "Different Ability" versus "Disability". We still have space available, click here to register;

<https://crisisandcounseling.org/peersupportconf/>

Please check out Part 2 of our Supported Decision-Making webinar series;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sL70fyuPLj0&feature=youtu.be>

Part 3 took place on February 25th and highlighted the use of Supported Decision-Making when making medical decisions. When the recorded link is available, we will be posting it on our social media

pages and in our summer newsletter.

We are sad to announce that one of our long-time employees, Susan Fairfield, is retiring. Sue has been a Parent Information Specialist for 28 years. She has been an invaluable member of our team and while we will miss her greatly, we wish her much happiness as she spends time with her family, especially her grandkids.

With Sue's retirement comes the addition of our newest employee, Tara Hembree. Tara's personal experience includes parenting a 12-year-old with a genetic disorder. Tara also has professional experience in the areas of MaineCare, Katie Beckett, TANF, and Food Supplements. We are excited to be adding her to our MPF family.

Please continue to watch our website and social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, & YouTube for continued updated information and reach out to Maine Parent Federation with any questions or concerns.

Kind Regards,
Carrie Woodcock, Executive Director

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Peer Support: It Takes a Village!



Maine Parent Federation and G.E.A.R. Parent Network are sponsoring a one-day **free** conference for parents and youth.

**Saturday, March 14, 2020
Governor Hill Mansion
136 State Street, Augusta, ME**

Register here:

<https://crisisandcounseling.org/peers-support-conference-registration/>

Maine Parent Federation, Inc. in collaboration with NAMI Maine is offering a free training for parents:



Youth Mental Health First Aid Presented by:



Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, and caregivers how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.

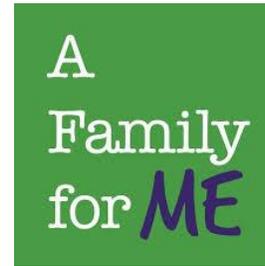
**Friday, April 24, 2020 - 8:30 AM–5:00 PM
Bangor Public Library, 145 Harlow Road**

Pre-registration is required, limited to 30 participants

To register go to:

<https://www.namimaine.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1339041&group=>

If you have any questions, call Maine Parent Federation at 800-870-7746 or E-mail: parentconnect@mpf.org.



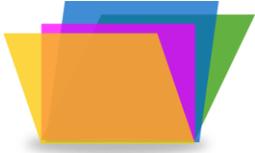
As of December 1st, 2019 there were 2,222 children in the custody of Maine DHHS, with the number of licensed foster (resource) homes far fewer than the number needed.

The new administration of DHHS, including Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew and OCFS Director Todd Landry, are committed to supporting Maine’s resource parents and improving Maine’s child welfare system.

Recently Commissioner Lambrew signed Maine’s Resource Parent Bill of Rights, supporting the needs of Maine’s adoptive, foster and kinship parents. Additionally, DHHS has streamlined the process of becoming a licensed resource parent.

“The Department is committed to supporting all resource families,” Landry said “..Foster parents are, in many ways, the glue that holds together the child welfare system by partnering with our staff to care for the day-to-day physical, mental, and emotional needs of Maine children”. We extend our gratitude to Maine's foster families and welcome new families to join us.

To learn more about foster care and adoption in the state of Maine, please visit A Family for ME at www.afamilyformemaine.org or call toll free at (844) 893-6311.



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:

- **Emancipation**
- **Schizophrenia**

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!

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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 one-on-one support.

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 help or know of a family that needs help, 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



MPF staff have been busy updating our workshops and printed materials!

Topics include:

Education is Special: *A Guide to Special Education in Maine*

Navigating the special education system can often be confusing for parents. This workshop is an introduction to the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) and defines some of the common terms/acronyms you will hear. We will discuss the purpose and structure of an IEP/504, as well as explaining the differences between the two. Parents are also provided with information on Procedural Safeguards and Due Process for resolving issues that may arise between the school and parents.

Transition to Kindergarten

New school, new faces, new smells, new friends! This workshop explores the impact of transitioning to a new school. Parents will learn how to prepare their child and what to expect during this time.

Transition Planning: *Looking Beyond the High School Years*

Your kids are growing up! This workshop educates parents on what to expect as your child becomes an adult. When your child reaches the age of majority (18) many changes occur and navigating the switch from children’s services to adult services can often be difficult. We will discuss how to develop a successful transition plan and what transition services are available in Maine.

Self-Advocacy: *Finding Your Voice*

Your voice matters! This workshop for youth with disabilities of transition age explores the concept of Self-Advocacy. Many youth already self-advocate on their own, but might not even be aware they are doing so. This workshop provides youth with skills to help them better voice their opinions to get their needs met. Youth are encouraged to share their dreams and goals for the future as we discuss the next steps to making it possible.

Supported Decision Making

The guardianship probate was recently changed in Maine as of September 1, 2019. This change requires a “least restrictive alternative” before a judge grants someone guardianship. Supported Decision Making is one model that allows a person to retain their rights and make their own decisions with the help of a support team of people they trust.

Please E-mail Jodie Hall, jhall@mpf.org or Dylan Campbell, dcampbell@mpf.org, or call MPF at (800) 870-7746 for more information.



What You Need to Know

www.understood.org/ By Amanda Morin

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), you might be wondering if he can receive special education services during the summer. These services are known as **extended school year (ESY) services** and are an option for some students. Here's what you should know about ESY services.

What is ESY?

ESY services are not the same thing as summer school. They're specialized instruction or related services that are part of your child's IEP. If your child receives ESY services, they're at no cost to you, under FAPE.

ESY services are provided when school's not typically in session. That's often during the summer. But for some kids it can also be during other extended breaks, like winter vacation.

The services are individualized to help each child maintain his skills and not lose the progress he's made toward his goals. For some kids, this may mean one-on-one tutoring. For others it may be a few sessions of occupational therapy or speech therapy each week. What ESY looks like for your child is a decision made by his IEP team.

Who is eligible for ESY?

ESY isn't guaranteed for all students who have IEPs. (And not all kids with IEPs need it.) The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act lets each state or school district set its own rules for eligibility. So the standards vary from place to place.

In many states, kids with learning and thinking differences are unlikely to get ESY services. But it's important to check with your state's department of education. It can tell you what the standards are where you live.

IDEA does say that schools can't limit ESY services to kids with certain issues. For example, a school can't decide to not give services to kids with dysgraphia. It also can't give services only to kids with autism spectrum disorder, for instance.

What does an IEP team consider to figure out if ESY services are needed?

If your child is eligible, his IEP team may talk about getting him ESY services. The main issues the team looks at are regression (losing skills) and recoupment (the time needed to relearn skills). The questions the team considers are:

- Will your child lose critical skills without continued support and teaching?
- Will it take a long time for him to regain those skills—longer than it would take a child without a learning difference?

If your child has a history of regressing and struggling to relearn, his IEP team will take that into account. If there's no data, it can be harder to make a decision. But there are some questions the team may ask to help predict how likely he is to regress. These include:

- Has your child had difficulty retaining skills over shorter breaks?
- Does your child have known issues with working memory?
- Does your child need continual reinforcement to keep his skills during the regular school year?
- Does your child have behavior issues that get in the way of learning during the school year? Will that be a problem next year without continued support over the summer?
- Is your child making steady progress toward meeting his IEP goals? And will a break in services threaten that progress?
- Is your child just beginning to master a critical skill, such as learning to read?

How can kids get help during the summer?

Even though not all kids are eligible for ESY services, every IEP team should discuss the option. If you think your child might need ESY, bring it up at your child's next meeting.

You might also ask the team to get your child's teachers to assess any regression or recoupment issues your child has after the shorter school breaks during the year. It's also helpful to make sure your child is assessed after summer breaks. That can help the team plan for the next summer.

Keep in mind, too, that ESY isn't the only way to keep kids learning. You can also reinforce your child's IEP goals at home or take advantage of other types of summer learning programs.

Key Takeaways

- Eligibility for ESY may vary by state or by school district.
- If your child's IEP team thinks he may lose academic skills over the summer, it may recommend ESY.
- Even if your child doesn't get ESY, you can help him keep learning throughout the summer.

For more information on ESY contact:
Maine Parent Federation at (800) 870-7746

parentconnect@mpf.org

www.mpf.org.



College Scholarships for Children with Disabilities

Though the price of obtaining a postsecondary education can be steep, both traditional and online degrees should be accessible to everyone. To offset costs, many seek alternative sources of funding, including grants, loans and scholarships. Students with disabilities who are entering college will find that there are selective scholarship opportunities for which they may apply that can help pay for school. Below, discover scholarships, both narrowly- and broadly-focused, that can help students with disabilities pay for their educations, as well as additional resources for obtaining funding.

www.affordablecollegesonline.org/college-resource-center/affordable-colleges-for-students-with-disabilities/

Acquiring a Disability Post-Graduation

If you obtain a disability after graduating college and still carry an outstanding student loan balance, you may be able to have your debt forgiven, depending largely on the specific lender. Federal student loans offer a total and permanent disability discharge procedure known as a TPD discharge. Specifically, a TPD discharge will relieve you from having to pay back a William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan, a Federal Family Education Loan, a Federal Perkins Loan, and/or a TEACH Grant service obligation. You must provide the Department of Education with information about your disability to have your debt discharged. Permanent disability can be proven in one of three ways:

- Veterans can submit documentation from the VA showing that it has determined that the applicant is unemployable due to a service-related disability
- If the applicant is receiving SSDI or SSI benefits, he or she can submit notice of the award of those benefits stating that the next scheduled benefit review is five to seven years from the date of the most recent determination
- The applicant can submit certification from a physician of total and permanent disability

Details regarding a TPD discharge are available on the Federal Student Aid website. Additional information on TPD discharge and its application process can be found at www.disabilitydischarge.com.

The procedures for private student loan forgiveness vary by lender. Several lenders, including Sallie Mae, Discover and Wells Fargo, follow a discharge procedure similar to that of the federal government. If you are carrying a private student loan, check with your lender to see how you may qualify for discharge.

If you receive a disability after graduation, you will likely want to apply for Social Security disability benefits. There are two programs available: Social Security Disability Insurance, which pays benefits to those individuals who have worked long enough and paid Social Security taxes; and Supplemental Security Income, which pays based on financial need. You can find out more and apply for disability benefits by visiting the Social Security Disability Benefits website.