A Note from the Executive Director...

As I sit and watch the snow falling this December day I find myself thinking about how quickly this past year went by. It was a very busy 2019 for MPF and I am so thankful for all of my staff and the families we work with.

Three highlights that come to mind include:

- Upgrading our workshops with the creation of printed guides
- The first successful year of our Supported Decision-Making (SDM) program and the families and professionals we were able to reach
- Sponsoring free First Aid Mental Health trainings for parents

As we move into the holidays and beyond, we are busy planning for our second cohort of Supported Decision-Making families. Our training will be held at the Cohen Community Center in Hallowell on Saturday, January 25th (see page 5 for more information). Our Family Support Navigators also received the full Supported Decision-Making training and are able to provide one-to-one support on SDM as well.

We are developing the second and third part of our Supported Decision-Making webinar series. Part 1 took place in September and can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHrme04YeOY&feature=youtu.be

Part 2 will provide information on using Supported Decision-Making within educational settings and Part 3 will provide information on using it within medical settings. Continue to check our social media pages for links.

We are proud to announce a new partnership with the New Mainers Public Health Initiative (NMPHI). MPF and NMPHI are working together to bring our peer-to-peer Family Support Navigator program to the immigrant communities. We are piloting our work in the Lewiston/Auburn area with the hopes of rolling it out statewide within the next year.

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

Happy Holidays!

Carrie Woodcock, Executive Director
Maine Parent Federation and G.E.A.R. Parent Network are sponsoring a one-day free conference for parents and youth.

Peer Support - It Takes a Village!
Saturday, March 14, 2020
Governor Hill Mansion
136 State Street, Augusta, ME

Watch our website and Facebook pages for updates and registration information.

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

Youth Mental Health First Aid
Presented by:
NAMI Maine

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, January 24, 2020 - 8:30 AM–5:00 PM
Hampton Inn, 48 Industrial Park Rd. in Saco

Pre-registration is required, limited to 30 participants
Lunch will be provided (pizza & salad)

To register go to:
https://www.namimaine.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1303083&group=

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

- Getting Organized
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Putting It All Together – A Handbook for Families Raising a Child with a Diagnosis of Emotional/Behavioral Disability or Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)
- Reactive Attachment Disorder

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
4 Ways to Make Holidays Better for Kids

Tips for keeping kids happy and able to enjoy the fun

By: Rachel Ehmke, Child Mind Institute

It’s easy for children to be smitten with the magic of the holidays. Fun presents, Extra sweets. A vacation from school—there’s a lot to like. But with the freedom and excess of the season, sometimes kids can get a little carried away. For most families, there will be a point when the kids get overtired and cranky, or greedy about presents, or would rather play a video game than talk to Grandma. Here are some tips to keep kids happy and ready to enjoy whatever the season brings.

1. Gifts, gifts, gifts: Getting presents is a high point of the holidays for any kid, but they shouldn’t be the only focus. As adults we know that giving presents can be just as rewarding as getting them, and we shouldn’t wait to teach that lesson to our children.

Even when kids are too young to buy a present, they can still make one, or help you pick out something. Some of my best holiday memories are of helping my father look for the perfect gift for Mom, or combing the mall to look for presents with my siblings as we got older. Volunteering, participating in a local toy drive, or giving each of your kids a little money to give to a charity of their choice are all great ideas for getting children in a more generous mood.

Also, remember that the best gifts that you give your children probably won’t be the material ones. Taking time for the whole family to get together to play a game, watch a movie, or decorate sugar cookies—these are the things that kids remember as they get older.

2. Let them help out: There’s a lot of extra work to do around the holidays — putting up decorations, cooking big dinners, throwing parties. The Martha Stewart in all of us can take over, but it’s important to take a step back and make sure our kids are included, too.

Children can help set the table, decorate the house, and wrap presents. If they’re too young to wrap, they can help by holding down the paper or getting the tape ready — there’s always something kids can do. And at holiday time, the preparations are often as fun and as meaningful as the end product. Plus, this way kids won’t feel left out — or be glued to the iPad for hours.

3. Keep routines: We love the holidays because they give us a break from the everyday, but that can also make them stressful, especially for kids who find routine comforting. Try to keep some things constant. Kids still need snack time, they still need special attention from you, and they still need a chance to unwind before bedtime.

At family gatherings when they notice the kids are “getting antsy,” psychologist Rachel Busman says she and her sister give them their baths, get them into pajamas, and turn on a movie. “We know when they need to wind down, and no one judges us for excusing ourselves from the table to do these things,” she says. “In fact, my sister and I enjoy some great conversations during this time.”

4. Remember they’re kids: Some holiday traditions depend on kids being on their best behavior: lengthy services, parties with lots of strangers, elaborate meals that may not appeal to picky eaters. Try to keep those to a minimum and customize festivities for your kids’ frustration level. Don’t schedule more than one demanding event in a day, and make sure to include physical activity and plenty of downtime. Your kids will be grateful — and so will you.
At Maine Adaptive we believe that having access to and participating in recreational sports is integral to a well-rounded life for every person.

Founded in 1982, Maine Adaptive is now the largest year-round adaptive recreation program in the state of Maine for adults and children with disabilities. Over 400 volunteers assist our athletes in appreciating the joys and challenges of sports participation.

Maine Adaptive provides over 3,500 lessons winter and summer thanks to the generous support of individuals, businesses, corporations, and foundations that sustain our program every year.

Maine Adaptive offers a variety of recreational winter sport lessons for individuals with disabilities: Alpine Skiing, Alpine Race Team, Snowboarding, Nordic Skiing, Snowshoeing, and Climbing.

Maine Adaptive Sports & Recreation
8 Sundance Lane
Newry, Maine 04261
www.maineadaptive.org

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Upcoming Supported Decision Making Training!

Maine Parent Federation is seeking families to participate in its second year cohort providing education, resources, and referrals around providing Supported Decision-Making as an alternative option to full guardianship.

Supported Decision-Making ("SDM") is a method of developing decision-making skills by relying on a team of Supporters to assist an individual in collecting information, processing information, and coming to a reasoned decision. SDM is an alternative to guardianship in that it provides a trusted and formalized environment for individuals who are seeking assistance with decision-making while still promoting self-determination. In contrast to guardianship, SDM is flexible and can change with the needs of an individual to provide more opportunities for independence and autonomy.

We have completed our first year of the pilot program and are currently seeking more families of youth who are transition age, 8th grade through 11th grade, who would like to participate in our second year cohort. Participation in this pilot would require attendance at two full-day trainings, working closely with employees at Maine Parent Federation to receive support and allow observation of the implementation of the school transition plan, and completion of surveys so we are able to collect data to show how the support and resources have changed outcomes for families and ultimately to help create a program curriculum to implement.

In addition to the resources and guidance around Supported Decision-Making, Maine Parent Federation will also offer a stipend, meals, and mileage reimbursements to families who participate in this two-part training.

The first part of the training will be held on Saturday, January 25th at the Cohen Community Center in Hallowell with the second part following in May 2020.

For more information or if you would like to participate, please contact us at (800) 870-7746 or parentconnect@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 contact Jodie Hall ([jhall@mpf.org](mailto:jhall@mpf.org)) or Dylan Campbell ([dcampbell@mpf.org](mailto:dcampbell@mpf.org)), or call MPF at (800) 870-7746 for more information.