



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

# Parent Connection

**Summer 2020**

## *A Note from the Executive Director . . .*

Who knew when I wrote my spring Director’s note where our state would be as I wrote my summer note? What a tremendous change we have all navigated over the last three months. I hope you are doing as well as circumstances allow you to and please know Maine Parent Federation (MPF) is always here to assist you through these challenging times.

Here at MPF we were able to squeeze in our conference, “Peer Support: It takes a Village” before our state went into lock down. For those of you who were not able to attend, check out our keynote speaker [Jake Shumbo](#), he was phenomenal and will really lift your spirits.

We have abided by the Governor’s order and suspended all in-person activities since the middle of March. The silver lining to this is that MPF was able to go virtual. We have moved all of our training’s online with the use of our website, ZOOM, and Facebook. If you have been unable to attend live, check out the recordings of all the topics we have offered;

- [Self-Advocacy](#)
- [Supported Decision-Making](#)
- [Special Education Guidance During COVID 19 with DRM](#)

- [Home Schooling Your Special Needs Child During COVID 19](#)
- [PBIS at Home During COVID 19](#)
- [Transition to Kindergarten](#)
- [Transition Planning Looking Beyond the High School Years](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation & Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#)

We are hosting virtual Parent Support groups once a week and we will also be offering a Youth Support group. Stay tuned to your email and our social media pages for the dates.

Please continue to watch our website and social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, & YouTube for continued updated information. Please reach out to Maine Parent Federation with any questions or concerns, as always, we continue to be here for you during these unsure times.

Kind Regards,  
*Carrie Woodcock*, Executive Director

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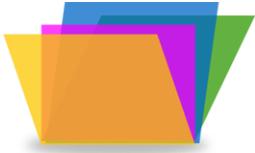
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## What's New in the Information Center at MPF?

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:

- **Behavior**
- **Evaluation**
- **Executive Function**
- **Section 504**

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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:dnewcombe@mpf.org)

**Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, and Washington**  
Robin Levesque, (207) 538-0866,  
[rlevesque@mpf.org](mailto:rlevesque@mpf.org).

## Stress and Coping

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

### For Parents:

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared. Watch for behavior changes in your child. Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- *Excessive crying or irritation in younger children*
- *Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)*
- *Excessive worry or sadness*
- *Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits*
- *Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens*
- *Poor school performance or avoiding school*
- *Difficulty with attention and concentration*
- *Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past*
- *Unexplained headaches or body pain*
- *Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs*

### Ways to Support Your Child:

- *Talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak.*
- *Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.*
- *Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.*
- *Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.*
- *Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.*
- *Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.*

### For People at Higher Risk for Serious Illness:

People at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults, and people with underlying health conditions are also at increased risk of stress due to COVID-19. Special considerations include:

- *Older adults and people with disabilities are at increased risk for having mental health concerns, such as depression.*
- *Mental health problems can present as physical complaints (such as headaches or stomachaches) or cognitive problems (such as having trouble concentrating).*
- *Doctors may be more likely to miss mental health concerns among people with disabilities due to a focus on treating underlying health conditions, compared to people without disabilities.*
- *Older adults because depression can be mistaken for a normal part of aging.*

## 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.

\*Additionally, the SRC is actively looking to recruit more members to represent the voices of those impacted by disability. Please visit [www.mainesrc.org](http://www.mainesrc.org) for more information.

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DRM is Maine's Protection and Advocacy agency for people with disabilities. They represent people whose rights have been violated or have been discriminated against based on their disability. They also provide training on rights and self-advocacy and advocate for public policy reform.

If you are seeking advocacy/legal assistance on behalf of yourself or someone else, DRM now has an Online Intake Form available at <https://drme.org/online-intake-form>.



The Parent Center Hub has some great information for parents regarding virtual IEP Meetings that include a Virtual IEP Meeting Tip Sheet, How to Participate in Virtual IEP Meetings, Common Questions & Answers, and more.

Check them out at: [https://www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo\\_items/virtual-iep-meeting-tipsheets.pdf](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo_items/virtual-iep-meeting-tipsheets.pdf)

# Parks and Recreation

## Visiting Parks and Recreational Facilities

### Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19

**Staying physically active is one of the best ways to keep your mind and body healthy.** In many areas, people can visit parks, trails, and open spaces as a way to relieve stress, get some fresh air and vitamin D, stay active, and safely connect with others.

**Know before you go:** While these facilities and areas can offer health benefits, it is important that you follow the steps below to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

#### **DO**

- Visit parks that are close to your home
- Prepare before you visit
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others (“social distancing”) and take other steps to prevent COVID-19
- Play it safe around and in swimming pools. Keep space between yourself and others

#### **DON'T**

- Visit parks if you are sick or were recently exposed to COVID-19
- Visit crowded parks
- Use playgrounds
- Participate in organized activities or sports

**Don't:** Visit parks if you are sick or you were recently exposed to COVID-19

- If you are sick with COVID-19, were recently exposed (within 14 days) to someone with COVID-19, or just don't feel well, do not visit public areas including parks or recreational facilities.
- Follow recommended steps to take if you are feeling sick.

**Do:** Visit parks that are close to your home. Traveling long distances to visit a park may contribute to the spread of COVID-19 as:

- Most travel requires you to stop along the way or be in close contact with others.
- Travel may also expose you to surfaces contaminated with the virus that causes COVID-19.

**Don't:** Visit crowded parks

- Do not visit parks where you cannot stay at least 6 feet away from others at all times.

**Do:** Prepare before you visit

#### **State or local parks**

State and local authorities will decide whether parks and other recreational facilities will open. Check with the park in advance to be sure you know which areas or services are open, such as bathroom facilities and concessions, and bring what you need with you.

## **National parks**

The National Park Service will decide on a park-by-park basis whether a national park will be open. Please check with individual parks for specific details since, in many cases, visitor centers, concessions, and bathroom facilities might be closed.

## **Beaches or other swimming areas**

State and local authorities will decide whether natural bodies of water and beaches or swim areas will be open. Please check with individual beaches or swim areas for specific details.

**Do:** Stay 6 feet away from others (“social distancing”) and take other steps to prevent COVID-19

If a park, beach, or recreational facility is open for public use, visiting is okay as long as you practice social distancing and take everyday steps such washing hands often and covering coughs and sneezes. Follow these actions when visiting a park, beach, or recreational facility:

- Stay at least six feet from others at all times. This might make some open areas, trails, and paths better to use. Do not go into a crowded area.
- Avoid gathering with others outside of your household.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Bring hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to use if soap and water are not available.

**Don’t:** Use playgrounds

Do not use playgrounds, including water playgrounds, located within local, state, or national parks.

Using playgrounds might lead to the spread of COVID-19 because:

- They are often crowded and could easily exceed recommended guidance for gatherings.
- It can be challenging to keep surfaces clean and disinfected.
- The virus can spread when young children touch contaminated equipment and then touch their hands to their eyes, nose, or mouth.

**Don’t:** Participate in organized activities or sports

In general, most organized activities and sports such as basketball, baseball, soccer, and football that are held on park fields, open areas, and courts are not recommended. These activities and sports typically require coaches and athletes, who are not from the same household or living unit to be in close proximity, which increase their potential for exposure to COVID-19.

**Do:** Play it safe around and in swimming pools, and keep space between yourself and others

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the water. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) of pools should kill COVID-19.

Swimming and other water-related activities are excellent ways to get the physical activity needed for a healthy life. If you are not sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, it is safe to use swimming pools as long as steps are taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Practice social distancing by staying at least six feet (two meters) from others.
- Avoid large gatherings of more than 10 people.
- Keep your hands clean by washing hands with soap and water, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

*Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD),  
Division of Viral Diseases*