

DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER

A monthly newsletter by The Autism Program at Boston Medical Center for families and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) & other neurodevelopmental diagnoses

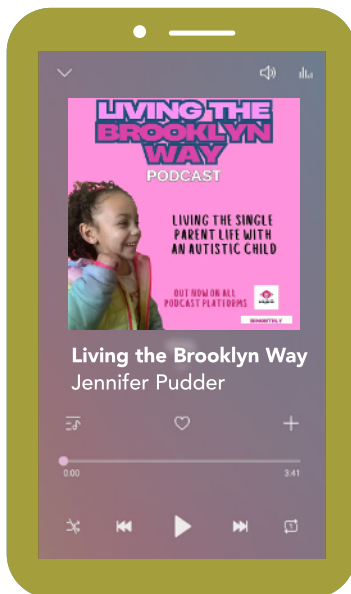
Happy November!

Colorful leaves abound, chilly days, and darkness by 5PM - it's clear that we are very much deep into Fall. While that can call for cozy nights and holidays ahead, we also know it can bring challenges in staying warm, healthy, and

safe for many of our neighbors. Especially amid the current barriers in accessing supports, such as the halt in SNAP/WIC benefits, it is important to know what resources are available within your own communities. In this month's Development and Beyond, we will

be sharing a great deal of information about the various types of supports available for free through community organizations, as well as some more. Read on to learn all about it!

what is the autism program listening to?



If you know us, the Autism Program is always on the lookout for some great content about ASD and neurodiversity. Recently, we had the pleasure of coming across this fantastic podcast called **Living the Brooklyn Way** by Jennifer Pudder! Jennifer is a single mom of two navigating autism with her daughter, Brooklyn, and her podcast covers all things from diagnosis, ABA therapy,

sibling support, self-care, and all the ups and downs of everyday life from the perspective of a fierce mom and advocate. Her honest and informative episodes are full of insight, resources, tears and heart, and we encourage everyone to check it out! Available on all podcast platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts.



Episode Highlight:

Episode 2

Episode 4

Episode 5

In this edition:

PG 1

What is the Autism Program Listening To?

PG 2

Upcoming Events for Children & Families

PG 3

Food resources to reach out to

PG 5

Holiday Resources: Gifts, meals, etc

PG 6

ASD Research studies seeking participants

Learning Opportunities

Click or scan the QR code to register and find more information about the event.



11/12 Caregiver Wellness & Burnout Prevention

7 to 8pm | Haverhill SEPAC

Join this virtual, hands-on workshop on how to protect your energy & caregiving. Walk away with clarity, practical tools, and a personalized action plan to make caregiving more sustainable.



11/12 Moving from Crisis to Clarity

4pm | Northeast Arc

When your child is diagnosed with autism, emotions can feel huge. Explore how to move out from the flood of everyday worry & frantic coping into a steadier place of confidence and direction.



11/13 My Kid is Not Going to School - What Now?

12pm | PPAL

Does your child resist going to school, avoid doing homework, or frequently ask to come home early? Join this discussion of how to face this challenge while maintaining our relationship with our child!



11/17 Housing & Living Skills

10am | Autism Housing Pathways

Learn about housing models, options, and living skills that can be worked on at school and home to support steps to independence and open doors to more experiences.



11/18 ACT Strategies for Families of Children with Autism

6:30 to 7:30pm | Autism Alliance

This webinar is designed to support caregivers through the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), a scientific approach to help parents respond to challenges with clarity, calm, and compassion.



11/18 How to Help Parents Navigate a Child's Anxiety

12pm | Deconstructing Stigma

This presentation will discuss how home settings can affect children and teens who struggle with anxiety and OCD. Learn about how conditions manifest in young people and the impact on the entire family system.



11/18 Pathways to Friendship

6pm | The Arc of MA

Families often struggle with how to help their children with disabilities form relationships with peers without disabilities. Join this webinar for concrete suggestions, tools, and handouts to help.



11/19 OCD in Autism

6:30pm | Lurie Center for Autism

Join this discussion on the intersection between obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and the autism spectrum. The presentation will review the differences between repetitive behaviors/thoughts in autism and OCD, how OCD might present differently in those on the spectrum or with limited language, and a review of the medical and psychological treatments for OCD.



11/19 Protecting Adults with Disabilities from Abuse

12pm | DPPC

This webinar will explain how to report concerns of abuse and talk about the state's Abuser Registry. The webinar will also provide information about the Commission's new resources as well as its investigation, oversight and prevention efforts to protect persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Do you need help finding food?

We all know that food is a necessity—however many are currently in need of assistance with finding and affording food. This comprehensive list was created to help those living in MA in finding free food & support within their communities.

If you or someone you know are in need of food assistance, we recommend that you start with contacting these two major organizations.



PROJECT BREAD

Need help paying for food?
Let's chat.

CALL OR TEXT: 1 (800) 645-8333

Mon-Fri: 8am-7pm Sat: 10am-2pm

PROJECT BREAD

Project Bread is a statewide resource and advocacy organization for those experiencing food insecurity. Call or text their [Foodsource Hotline](tel:1-800-645-8333) to be connected with a counselor—they are able to help you find the closest spot for **free groceries, hot meals, and food programs**, as well as ways to afford more food with your **budget**.



1-(800) 645-8333

www.projectbread.org



Massachusetts 211

Mass 211 can offer support with a variety of areas of living such as food, utility, transportation, caregiving, holidays and more. **Dial 2-1-1** to access their **24/7 hotline** and be connected to support.

NEW BEDFORD & FALL RIVER: Mass 211 is currently offering free Lyft rides for qualified individuals to access needs, such as food pantries, groceries, as well as non-emergency medical appointments. Dial 211 to check your eligibility. Rides can often be scheduled immediately or up to 48 hours in advance.



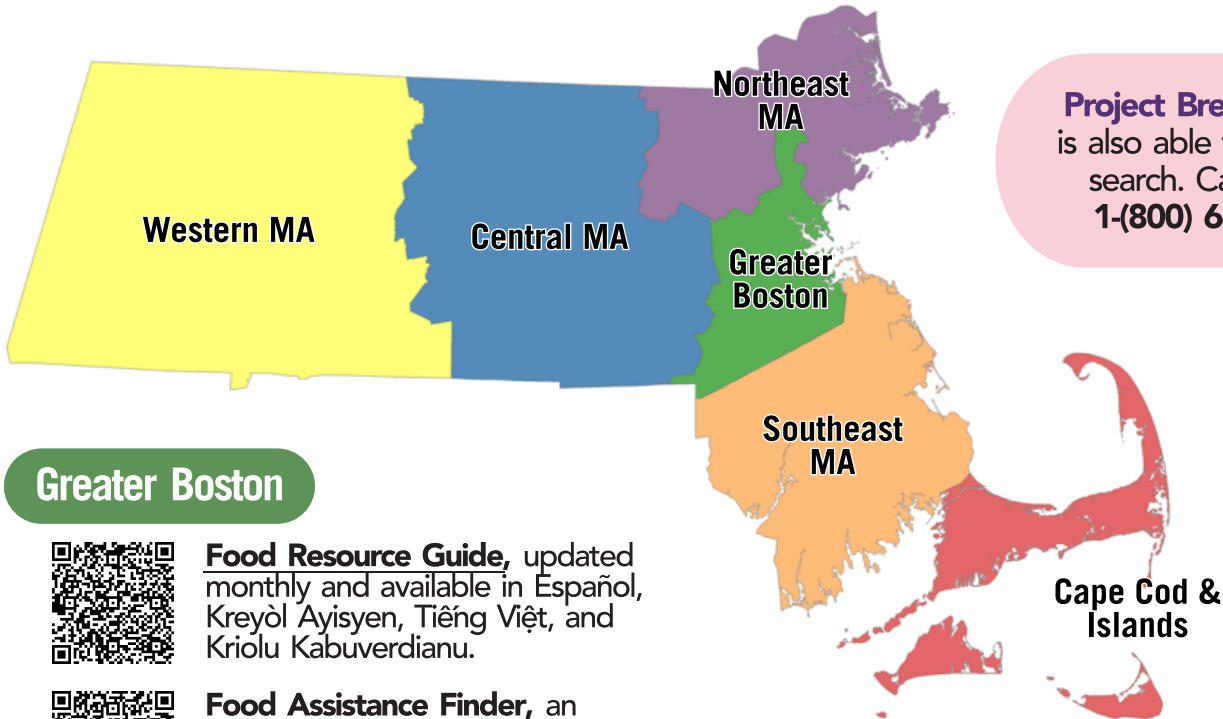
Need a ride?



Ride Match is a one-stop directory of public, private, and accessible transportation options in Massachusetts. Visit www.massridematch.org to see what's available.

Find food near you

Below, you will find a list of food resource guides and online maps for different MA regions. With each resource, you can **search by your town/zip code** to locate the closest food pantry, soup kitchen, and other food programs to you.



Project Bread Hotline is also able to help you search. Call or text 1-(800) 645-8333.

Greater Boston



Food Resource Guide, updated monthly and available in Español, Kreyòl Ayisyen, Tiếng Việt, and Kriolu Kabuverdianu.



Food Assistance Finder, an online map where you can search by address to find the closest resource to you.

Southeast MA



South Shore Food Bank, directory of food pantries across Brockton, Quincy, inland South, and coastal South shore.



South Shore Community Action Council, an online map where you can search by town to find food pantries and meal programs.

Cape Cod & Islands



Food Resource Guide, last updated October 2025 that includes a list of food resources around Cape Cod & the Islands.



Cape Cod Council of Churches, community organization that offers soup kitchen and food pantry in central Cape Cod.

Northeast MA



Food Resource Guide, last updated October 2025 that provides list of helpful food assistance programs with town and contact information.



Merrimack Valley Food Bank, an online map tool to search for food pantries and meal programs in your area along with their schedules.

Central MA



Worcester County Food Bank Finder, an online map tool where you can search by your address to find closest food resource to you.

Western MA



Food Bank of Western MA, an online map tool where you can search by your address to find closest food resource to you.

All about holidays:

Gifts, meals, and all things special

Before we know it, the holidays are rapidly approaching! 'Tis the season to know about what community resources are available to help out your holidays, whether that be **meal programs**, **gift assistance**, or especially **sweet recipes** to enjoy with loved ones!

Gift assistance



Christmas Castle

Between 11/18 and 12/5, The Salvation Army is accepting registrations for Boston families with children ages 14 and under to receive **food gift cards & gifts** for each child in your family. Visit the website for more information!



A Christian ministry
of loving service
and education

Gift Assistance Line

This organization provides gift assistance for families all over eastern MA, including Boston and Cape Cod.

To get more information and to request a gift, visit the website and call **(508) 238-2562** ASAP.



Citizens for Citizens

The Operation Christmas program is for families in the Fall River & Taunton area with children ages 12 and younger. Applications are due on 12/5, so apply now if you reside in Fall River & Taunton!



Christmas
in the City

Jake's Toy Mania Program

This program can provide toys & other gifts to children living in Greater Boston area under age 16! You must sign up in-person on select dates, make sure to visit their website for the exact information!



Holiday meals

If you're looking for help with accessing food on Thanksgiving day, there are likely community organizations near you that are offering public dinners.

Below are some options for the greater Boston and the Northeast area. If you live in other areas, reach out to your local churches, libraries, shelters, food pantries, social service agencies, and other non-profit community centers for ideas.

Greater Boston



Thanksgiving Resource Guide

by Vital CxNs & Neighborhood Food Action Collaborative

Northeast MA



2025 Free Thanksgiving Meals

by Community Resource Center at Northeast Arc

Sensory-Friendly Holiday Pops

Families are invited to a **free & sensory-friendly holiday performance at Symphony Hall!** Tickets are first come, first serve, so make sure to grab yours now. Produced by Rodman for Kids and the Flutie Foundation.

- December 6th at 10:30AM
- Symphony Hall, Boston MA
- For tickets or for more info, scan/click the QR code or email bstiles@rodmanforkids.org





SEEKING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Do you have a child with autism and a baby under 9 months old?

Researchers at UMass Chan Medical School are interested in learning more about the language and social communication skills of baby siblings of children with ASD.

The goal of the PETAL Study is to guide families on how to support and promote their baby's language development. Participation involves home visits and support via Zoom until your baby turns 2 years old:

Home Visits (six visits, around 2 hours each)

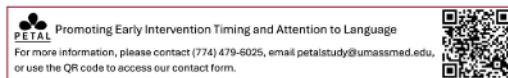
- Parent completes questionnaires.
- Parent and Baby are videotaped while they play together.
- Baby completes assessments of language and cognitive skills at each visit, and an additional assessment for characteristics of autism at 2 years old.
- Baby briefly wears an elastic cap that monitors brain activity (a technique called EEG).
- Baby wears an audio recording device that captures their language environment for one day.

Home visits begin when your baby is 6-9 months old and continue until 2 years old. Compensation of \$40 is provided for each visit. You will also receive activity cards, toys, and books that are developmentally appropriate for your baby at each visit.

Virtual Language Support (12 sessions, 1 hour each)

- Parent participates in social and communication coaching sessions aimed at improving their baby's social communication, engagement, and play skills.
- Parent is guided through strategies to support their baby's development.

Virtual language support begins when your baby is 9-15 months old and occurs weekly (via Zoom) for at least three months.

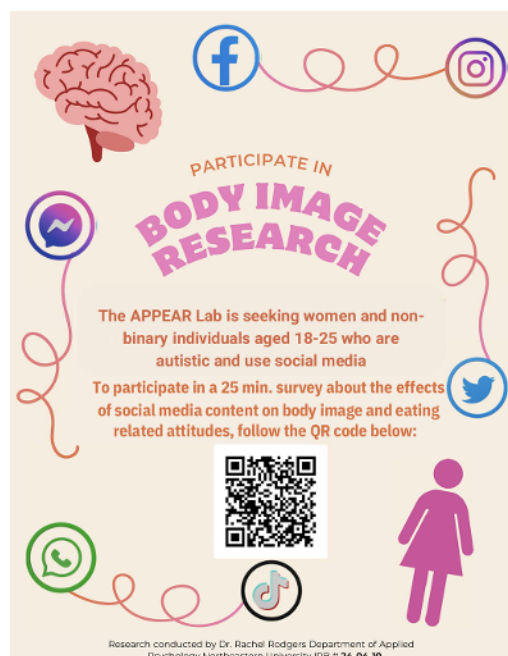


Protocol ID: IRB 22-1637 UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 9/17/2025 Committee: Medical IRB 3

PETAL Study at **UMass Chan Medical School** is currently recruiting families with a child with autism and a baby sibling under 9 months old. The goal of the study is to guide families on how to support and promote their baby's language development. It begins when your child is 6-9 months old and will involve home visits and support via Zoom, until they turn 2 years old. You will be compensated up to \$240.



- ▶ If you or someone you know may be interested, please fill out a screening form and a member of the PETAL team will reach out: **Screening Form**
- ▶ Contact PETALStudy@umassmed.edu or (774) 479-6025.



Social Media, Body Image, and the Autism Spectrum Study at **Northeastern University** is currently recruiting autistic individuals (ages 18-25) to be a part of their research study. They will be investigating the experiences of social media use, body image, and eating among autistic young women and non-binary people. Participants must be 1) autistic, 2) be assigned female at birth, 3) identify as either female or outside of the gender binary, and 4) be between the ages of 18-25. Upon completion of the survey, participants can choose to be included in a raffle to receive \$75.



- ▶ If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact r.rodgers@northeastern.edu.
- ▶ Visit this [website](#) for more information.

Connect With Us!

Are you seeking to spread the word about your upcoming events, services and/or programs for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders? Reach out to autismprogram@bmc.org to inquire about being featured on our monthly newsletter.

Resources



The Autism Program continues to support families in many ways both inside and outside of Boston Medical Center. Check out our website to learn more about the services, supports and programs we offer including our Autism Friendly Hospital Initiative, Teens Engaged as Mentors (TEAM) program, and our training offerings. We also have a huge resource library where you can access free information on a variety of topics such as safety, behavioral support, transition to adulthood, insurance and more!



www.bmc.org/autism
Autismprogram@bmc.org



The Autism Program



@BMCAutismProgram

Clinic

Our DBP clinicians are available for developmental evaluations, assessments and follow up. To connect with the clinical team, please call 617-414-4841 and follow the prompts for Developmental Pediatrics.



Our Clinicians

Marilyn Augustyn, MD

Arathi Reddy, DO

Rachel Amgott, NP

Christina Lazdowsky, NP

Mei Elansary, MD

Audrey Christiansen, MD

Sarah Canale, MD

Mary Ellen Killion, NP

Arielle Spellun, MD

Bridget Poznanski, PhD

Rachel Vuolo, MD

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Development and Beyond is brought to you by the Autism Program at Boston Medical Center, a family support program of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics. **To join our mailing list for future newsletters, community resources and more, scan the QR code to the right!**



Do you have an idea for a future newsletter?

Email us at

autismprogram@bmc.org

with your suggestions!