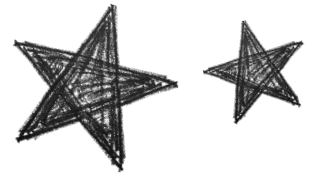


DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 89: January 6th, 2026

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

Happy New Year!



2026 according to the Chinese zodiac is the *Year of the Horse*, bringing vigor, enthusiasm, and confidence to our year. We hope that all our families and friends are beginning this new exciting year with lots of peace and support!

To help kick things off, this edition of *Development & Beyond* contains a special compilation of information, upcoming events, and opportunities. The start of a new year can easily feel disorienting, especially when your life involves many moving pieces - so hopefully this edition can be a helpful reminder to old and new ideas!

Continue reading for this month's newsletter, and don't hesitate to reach out to The Autism Program at Boston Medical Center with any questions!

We are here to help.

autismprogram@bmc.org



TIP: Visit our website at www.bmc.org/autism for a library of free, helpful resources! We have guides for accessing ABA therapy, state programs, special education, and much more.

in this edition:

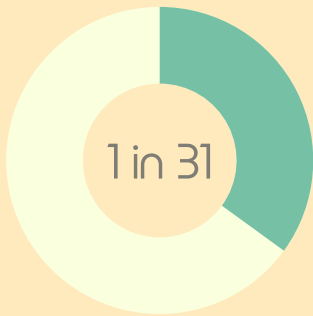
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2025: Quick Glance of research in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

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Upcoming events: Learning opportunities, support groups

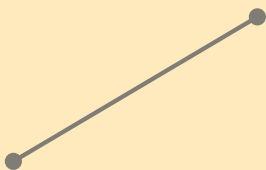




Autism prevalence of children in U.S. rise from 1 in 36 (2020) to 1 in 31 (2022-25).

"Prevalence and early identification of autism spectrum disorder among children aged 4 and 8 years", Kelly A. Sabw et al., CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, April 17, 2025

Prevalence: Total number of ASD diagnoses in a certain group at a certain time (data collected in 2022, analyzed in 2025).



Highest rates of ASD found in Asian/Pacific Island, Native American/Alaska Native, Black, Hispanic, and multicultural children.

"Prevalence and early identification of autism spectrum disorder among children aged 4 and 8 years", Kelly A. Sabw et al., CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, April 17, 2025

This finding is consistent with the **increased access and resources of identification services** for previously under represented groups, and does **NOT** indicate the odds of ASD.



ASD found to be 3.4 times more prevalent among boys than girls. However, it is important to note that current diagnostic tools do not include gender-specific approaches that account for potential differences in common traits.

- 75% of males exhibit "hallmark traits" like repetitive behaviors and speech delays, compared to only 40% of females
- Over 60% of females demonstrate social camouflaging behaviors, masking their symptoms and complicating their diagnosis
- Lack of research for gender-non conforming individuals

"Gender Differences in Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review of Diagnosis, Intervention, and Outcomes", Haoran Mao et al., Gender and Sustainability in the Global South



Masking: Conscious or unconscious suppression of natural autistic behaviors to fit in with societal norms.

upcoming events

Click the title or scan the QR code to find more information.
Resources below are free of cost or offer financial assistance.

1/8 Mental Health First Aid Training

6 week session starting January 8th, 2026

Do you want to learn how you can help adults, including those with disabilities, facing mental health crises? Northeast Arc is offering a free series of in-person trainings on Mental Health First Aid. During the course you will learn common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges, common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges, how to interact with someone in crisis, and how to connect a person with help.

RSVP required. In-person event in Danvers, MA.



1/12 Understanding & Supporting Autistic Teens

January 12th, 2026 | 8:30PM

Parents often wonder how to motivate their Autistic teens, particularly how much to push them and how much to let their teens take the lead. This 90-minute workshop with Q&A will cover common challenges and support strategies. Topics include a strengths-based overview of autism in adolescence, the intersection of stress, anxiety, and behavior, strategies for building connection and reducing tension, autism at school – including considerations for post-high school transition planning.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar.



1/14 Essential Advocacy Skills Bootcamp

4 part virtual training starting January 14th, 2026

Are you ready to transform your passion into a powerful, actionable plan for your child's success? Join a focused, four-part virtual workshop designed for parents and caregivers of school-aged children with disabilities to equip you with strategic communication methods and a framework for long-term planning. Learn systemic techniques for asking insightful questions, writing concise and constructive statements, developing impactful personal narratives, and building a comprehensive long-term support plan.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar series.



1/14 Recursos y evento de inscripción en MassHealth

14 de enero de 2026 | 11:00 a. m.

Presentado por: Maria Rodrigues, Especialista en extensión y educación de miembros. Hoy en día, muchas familias luchan contra la inseguridad alimentaria o de vivienda, y queremos ayudar a aliviar una de sus mayores preocupaciones: el acceso a una atención médica de calidad. Nuestro objetivo es educar y ayudar a los miembros de la comunidad a comprender los programas disponibles para que puedan recibir la atención que necesitan. Los miembros del equipo estarán disponibles en el sitio para brindar apoyo paso a paso durante el proceso de inscripción. También compartirán recursos como folletos, volantes e información sobre servicios comunitarios adicionales.



Es necesario confirmar asistencia. Este evento se celebra presencialmente en Lynn, Massachusetts. Visite el sitio web para obtener más información.

1/16 Grupo de Padres de niños y jóvenes con necesidades especiales

16 de enero de 2026 | 10:00 a. m.

Conoce a otros padres de niños y jóvenes con necesidades especiales & aprende cómo tu hijo/a puede obtener los servicios que necesita para tener éxito en la escuela. ¿Vives en Lawrence? ¿Tu hijo/a tiene necesidades especiales? ¿Estás preocupado/a por el progreso de su hijo/a? Los padres se reúnen mensualmente y cuentan con el apoyo de Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC). Tercer Viernes de Cada Mes 10AM – 12PM.



Es necesario confirmar asistencia. Se trata de un evento virtual que se celebrará a través de Zoom. Visite el sitio web para obtener más información.

1/20 Beyond the Diagnosis: Autism & Adoption

January 20th, 2026 | 7PM

If you are a waiting family with questions or hesitations about adopting an autistic child, a family who has been matched or placed with an autistic child or a child welfare professional who works with children or families with autism, MARE (Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange) invite you to join us for a virtual information and matching session. There will be a panel of experienced families and advocates with plenty of time for Q&A. Children with autism that are referred to MARE will be presented, and families will leave this event with tangible resources and guidance on next steps in their journey.



RSVP required. Virtual webinar.

1/20 From High School to the Workplace

January 20th, 2026 | 6PM

High school doesn't last forever, so what comes next? This workshop explores supported employment for young adults with complex needs and how families can prepare for the transition to meaningful work. Break down what competitive integrated employment really looks like, the planning and supports that make it possible, and how to connect individual interests and talents with the right job opportunities.

RSVP is required. Virtual webinar.



1/20 Understanding ASD & Psychiatric Medication

January 20th, 2026 | 7:30PM

Dr. Bayazit will guide attendees through an overview of autism, sharing helpful information about the diagnosis in an easy-to-understand way. Following this, he will introduce the topic of psychiatric medications, explaining what they are and when they may be helpful.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar.



1/27 Executive Functioning Deep Dive

January 27th, 2026 | 7PM

Join a deep dive into Executive Functioning. In this 90-minute webinar, the presenter and participants will explore executive functioning through a compassionate and strength-based lens. Learn practical ideas to support executive functioning for yourself or a loved one in a variety of settings.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar series.



**Doug Flutie Jr.
Foundation for Autism**

**2ND ANNUAL MEALS
FOR AUTISM PROGRAM**

In 2025, Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation along with Jersey Mike's Subs provided subs every single day for families and individuals with autism through their Meals for Autism Program, totaling to over 14,000 subs for 365 families! This program is back for another year - sign up today to receive up to a maximum of 4 regular size subs for free! To schedule your free lunch or dinner, simply fill out the form below and select your preferred date and local Jersey Mike's location.

SIGN UP: <https://form.jotform.com/243537163356156>



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Resources

The Autism Program is 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

[@BMCAutismProgram](https://twitter.com/BMCAutismProgram)

autismprogram@bmc.org

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.

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. Join our **mailing list** for future newsletters, community resources and more - just scan the QR code to the right!

