

# DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 91  
March 10th  
2026

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

## Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month!

This March, NACDD (National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities) launched their annual Developmental Disabilities Month campaign with the theme of **We're Here: Then, Now, Always**. The national campaign recognizes a simple truth: people with developmental disabilities have always been part of our communities — and always will be.

As the Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics here at BMC, some might say that every month of the year is a developmental disabilities awareness month — and I'm sure many of our friends and families would also relate! Everyday work and existence can often become meaningful acts of awareness, and the way that we show up for ourselves & each other reflects our commitment to advocacy. We hope that March can be a peaceful month where our friends and families have the opportunity to take care of themselves and connect with loved ones.

If you are looking to participate in the national campaign by NACDD, check out their website for more information. This relationship-building campaign will provide individuals with DD, family members, and the community-at-large the opportunity to **build relationships with key decision makers** in their communities, state, and federally.

Interested? Visit the NACDD website here to learn more — and happy Developmental Disabilities Awareness month to everyone!



<https://nacdd.org/2026-dd-awareness-month-were-here-then-now-always/>

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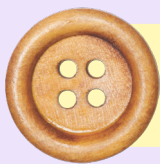
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# upcoming learning opportunities

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

## **3/10** [Family Mental Health Webinar](#)

7pm | National Alliance on Mental Illness MA

Join this online learning opportunity designed for families of people with mental health conditions. It will blend personal stories, research insights, and practical tools to help families reflect on where they have been, where they are now, and where they might go next. It will include 55 minutes of webinar, followed by a Q&A and an optional 30 minute small-group discussion for deeper conversation.

**RSVP required. Virtual webinar.**



## **3/12** [School Refusal](#)

6pm | Wayside Youth and Family Support Network

resented by Wayside's Family Support Specialist Carol Silva. Hear about her personal story and what the data shows regarding School refusal. Learn about the cycle of school refusal, strategies to use at home, and how you can work with your child's school to get your child back to school.

**RSVP required. Virtual webinar.**



## **3/18** [Understanding Your Child's Emotions and Behaviors](#)

7pm | Epilepsy Foundation of New England

This presentation is hosted by neuropsychologists Dr. Britt Emerton Carlson and Dr. Agnes Chung from Mass General Brigham. They will explain how both emotions and behaviors impact children with epilepsy. They will also share strategies on how to best support children, adolescents, and their families in navigating these obstacles.

**RSVP required. Virtual webinar series.**



## **3/18** [Legislative Advocacy for Disabilities](#)

6pm | Charles River Center of Needham

In these times defined by unprecedented challenges, advocacy is no longer optional – it is essential. Join a high-impact advocacy training that will equip you with the strategic tools and storytelling expertise needed to command legislative attention at the local, state, and federal levels. Join to protect the IDD/Autism community's future through advocacy during these pivotal times. **RSVP**

**required. Virtual webinar series.**



### **3/19** Deciphering the Medical Insurance Maze

6pm | Minute Man Arc

Do you have questions about how MassHealth (Medicaid), Medicare, and private insurance work for your adult disabled dependent? What happens when you retire? What is the difference between SSDI and SSI? How can I utilize Premium Assistance? Attend this free workshop to learn about navigating this often-tangled web as you pursue assisting your loved one.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar.



### **3/25** Departamento de Serviços de Desenvolvimento 101: Português

18h30 | Quarta-feira, 25 de março |

O Departamento de Serviços de Desenvolvimento da Região Metropolitana de Massachusetts apresenta o DDS 101: O que você precisa saber, com um intérprete de português. Este evento virtual é destinado a famílias de crianças e adultos que falam português e indivíduos de todas as idades. Os tópicos incluirão elegibilidade, transição, autodireção e apoio ao autismo.

É necessário confirmar presença. Webinar virtual.



### **3/25** Transition Planning & the IEP

12pm | The Arc of Massachusetts

This webinar will clarify why transition planning with your child's school is essential, what areas – education, employment, and independent living – should be addressed and when, and what it looks like in the IEP form.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar series.



### **4/2** Safety at Home & in the Community

10am | Northeast Arc

Nicole Simon, Senior Behavioral Consultant, Lurie Center for Autism, is a behavior analyst who utilizes the applied behavior analysis (ABA) framework to care for children and adults with ASD and related disorders. She will discuss challenging behaviors which can lead to safety concerns. This workshop will focus on proactive strategies to address safety at home, in the car, and in the community. She will also discuss how to develop a safety plan to help manage crisis situations. This webinar will be followed by a Group Consultation with Q&A.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar series.



# spring into some sensory-friendly fun!

With March, the outside world is slowly starting to feel real again - for families and children who are sick of staying in, we hear you! Below, we found some fun sensory-friendly events happening this month for you to explore. From musical performances, parades, and sensory-friendly hours, this list will be a great way to kickstart your Spring. **Please note, registration is required for all events through their website.**

## Something Borrowed, Something True: A Musical Exploration of the Essence of Belonging

3/14



What is American music? Our national soundscape is rich in diversity: diversity of style, of language, and of cultural contexts. It is indeed this diversity that makes something "American."



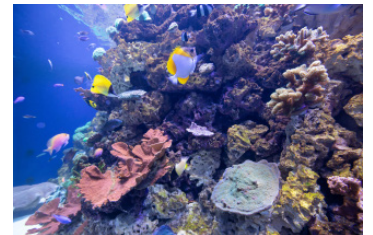
This ***special concert by Boston Symphony Orchestra*** is designed for all families with children or adults with ASD and/or sensory sensitivities. Come and enjoy a performance



with a flexible, non-judgemental environment! Modifications include relaxed house rules, reduced volume and lighting levels, extra space for movement, available noise-reduction headphones, designated quiet room and support spaces, modified food concessions, and credentialed autism therapist volunteers on site. TIP: Prepare for the experience by reading this ***Social Story*** in advance!

## 3/15 New England Aquarium: Sensory-friendly hours!

***Spend a morning at the Aquarium*** in a welcoming environment for those with sensory needs. During the event, guests will enjoy reduced noise levels, additional quiet spaces, sensory bags from KultureCity available for checkout, and more. Plus, take in a quieter & brighter movie screening at the Simons Theatre at 10am.



\$20 ticket for adults, \$15 for children. Sensory-friendly hour is from 8AM to 10AM only.



## SUFFS the Musical

3/21

3/22

3/28

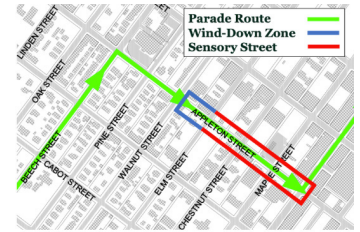
Tony Award®-winning musical SUFFS is about the brilliant, passionate, and funny American women who fought tirelessly for the right to vote. This musical explores the triumphs & failures of a struggle for equality that's far from over. Winner of the Outer Critics' Circle Award for Best New Musical.

In March, ***Emerson Colonial Theatre*** is offering three accessible performances: **Open caption on 3/21** where text will be displayed simultaneously to the live speech of the performance, **Audio descriptions on 3/22** where a small headset will provide audio narrations throughout the show, and **American sign language interpretation on 3/28**. Closed caption will be available as an option throughout all performances offered.



## 3/22 Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade: Sensory Street

The St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke is proud to introduce **Sensory Street**, a designated sensory-friendly viewing area for the 2026 Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade. This special section of the route is designed for individuals and families who prefer a calmer parade experience with reduced noise and sensory stimulation.



Expect no emergency or flashing lights, no sirens or amplified alarms, reduced loud or sudden vehicle noises, and bands featuring strings only \*no percussion or brass). This street will be open to all spectators and no reservations or special passes are required.

**Don't live in Holyoke?** Your town may be offering something similar. Check in with your town to confirm a sensory-friendly space and/or accommodations available throughout your parade.



## 2026 FILM LINEUP

### RECOVERY CITY

A raw exploration of life in recovery seen through the eyes of four women in the city of Worcester. From battling stigma to working on the frontlines to save lives, they use their lived experience and resilience to lift up those still struggling.

### PATRICE: THE MOVIE

A disabled couple, Patrice and Garry, want to marry, but face losing the government benefits they need to survive if they do. Undaunted, they plan a commitment ceremony while striving for social justice and equality for people with disabilities.

## Vinfen Film Festival

3/28

Each year, Vinfen uses the power of film to raise awareness, foster important dialogue, and fight against discrimination & stigma so often faced by people with mental health conditions & disabilities.



**The Film Festival returns in 2026** with four feature documentaries and one short film, alongside panel discussions with filmmakers, human services professionals & individuals with lived experience. \$25 general admission + \$25 optional reception.

### ROW OF LIFE

This film follows Paralympian Angela Madsen on her attempt to solo row the Pacific Ocean from L.A. to Hawaii. The film captures the year before the row and every step of Angela's perilous and inspiring journey.

### ASD BAND: THE MOVIE

This documentary chronicles a talented group of musicians on the autism spectrum who are pushing the boundaries of autism acceptance, one heart-pumping song at a time.

### THE BEAUTIFUL WORLDS OF DAVID RILEY

Documentary short inspired by pop culture, TV, and the urban landscape, telling the story of a self-taught artist with a disability who discovers a hidden talent for painting in his 40s.

# Women's History Month

As we celebrate Women's History Month, we're taking time to uplift the voices and experiences of autistic women! This month's spotlight aims to broaden our collective understanding by sharing meaningful information about the autism gender bias and inclusive community resources, as well as highlighting autistic women. Click on the resource title to find more information.

## Women in Autism

### **Autism Research Institute**

This article explores the autism gender bias – the long-standing gap in how autism is identified, studied, and experienced across different genders. It looks at real-world outcomes for autistic women and emerging research that aim to identify how we can bridge this gap and stand ASD in an inclusive and diverse world. An important and informational read for all.



## Honoring Remarkable Women:

### **Connections Behavior Planning & Intervention**

This article spotlights some extraordinary women who have defied negative social expectations and embraced their unique perspectives as strengths. From pioneering researchers to accomplished artists, read this article for inspiration and celebration!



## Women & Girls

### **Autism Books by Autistic Authors Project**



This online catalogue contains a list of 48 books devoted to topics related to autistic women and girls, written by autistic authors. Check out this list to find your next read.

## Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN)



This organization provides community support and resources for autistic women, girls, and queer people. This includes social support, advocacy, learning opportunities and other great resources.

Quick glance of  
March 2026



## International Waffle Day

Did you know that March 25th is International Waffle Day? Originating in Sweden centuries ago, it used to be a religious celebration called "*Vårfrudagen*", commemorating the Feast of Annunciation. However, the shift from religious observance to Waffle Day occurred gradually over time thanks to the words "*Vårfrudagen*" ("*Our Lady's Day*") and "*våffeldagen*" ("*waffle day*") sounding very similar. Now, it marks the beginning of spring and is celebrated worldwide by eating various waffle types, such as traditional heart-shaped Swedish, thick Belgian, or savory - the world is your waffle iron!

Feel free to check out this **Gluten-free banana protein waffle recipe** by **Boston Medical Center's Teaching Kitchen** for an easy, quick celebration - it only takes 15 minutes to make & has 17 grams of protein!



# Study Recruitment

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

## Autism In Workplaces

**Join Us For A Paid Focus Group At Harvard University**

To foster better communication, connection, and confidence between autistic and non-autistic employees in workplaces.

| WHO CAN ATTEND                                                                                                                                                                                | WHAT TO EXPECT                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>BOTH Autistic And Non-Autistic Adults (Must Be 18+).</li><li>Must Have Corporate Work Experience.</li><li>Able To Interact In A Group Of 2-4.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In-Person Interactive Workshop</li><li>Time: 2 Hours</li><li>Compensation: \$50 Gift Card.</li><li>Accessibility Support, Breaks, Snacks</li></ul> |

**Sign Up Now To Help Make Real Impact!**

**Location**  
Harvard Engineering Complex, 150 Western Ave, Allston, MA 02134

**Questions? Reach Out!**  
riddhi\_kasar@mde.harvard.edu  
lucas\_miyazaki@mde.harvard.edu

Participation Is Voluntary



Researchers at Harvard University are working on building *Noonchi*, a new tool designed to **foster better communication, connection, and confidence between autistic and non-autistic employees at workplaces**. They are hosting a co-design workshop where participants can interact with the prototype, give feedback, and take part in interactive creative activities to help directly shape the future of inclusivity in workplaces.

**Sign up for the workshop via form below:**

<https://forms.gle/nfkVGn4AhKsRHed4A>

**What to expect:**

- 2 hours long
- \$50 Amazon gift card & snacks provided
- In-person, small group (2-4 participants)
- Harvard SEC, 150 Western Ave, Allston
- Breaks, flexible participation, written prompts available

**Questions?**

Reach out to [riddhi\\_kasar@mde.harvard.edu](mailto:riddhi_kasar@mde.harvard.edu) or [lucas\\_miyazaki@mde.harvard.edu](mailto:lucas_miyazaki@mde.harvard.edu).



## NEURODIVERGENT PARENTS OF NEURODIVERGENT KIDS AND TECHNOLOGY STUDY

Are you the **parent** of a child age 9-17 with a diagnosis of autism and/or ADHD, living in the US?

And do you **also** have an autism and/or ADHD diagnosis, or strongly believe you would qualify for one?

We are researchers at Northeastern University studying the ethics of emerging technologies for neurodivergent children (like virtual reality and AI) who need your help!



**20 MINUTE ONLINE SURVEY**  
**60 MINUTE ZOOM INTERVIEW**

- Answer survey questions
- Talk about technology
- Receive a \$50 Amazon gift card

For more information, please email:  
**m.alper@northeastern.edu**

IRB #25-03-48

Are you the **parent of a child between ages 9 to 17 with a diagnosis of autism and/or ADHD?** And **do you also have an autism and/or ADHD diagnosis**, or strongly believe you would qualify for one? Researchers at Northern University are studying the **ethics of emerging technologies** for neurodivergent children (such as virtual reality and AI) and are looking for participants.

**What to expect:**

- 20 minute survey
- 60 minute Zoom interview
- \$50 Amazon gift card

**Questions and/or interested?**

Please contact Dr. Meryl Alper at [m.alper@northeastern.edu](mailto:m.alper@northeastern.edu).

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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](http://www.bmc.org/autism)  
[@BMCAutismProgram](https://twitter.com/BMCAutismProgram)  
[autismprogram@bmc.org](mailto: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!

