

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

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Dear friends & families,

Happy May!

As the trees turn bright green and flowers begin to bloom, we're excited to welcome the warmth and renewal that spring brings. This time of year often marks important transitions—especially for many of our families as the school year comes to a close and new routines begin to take shape.

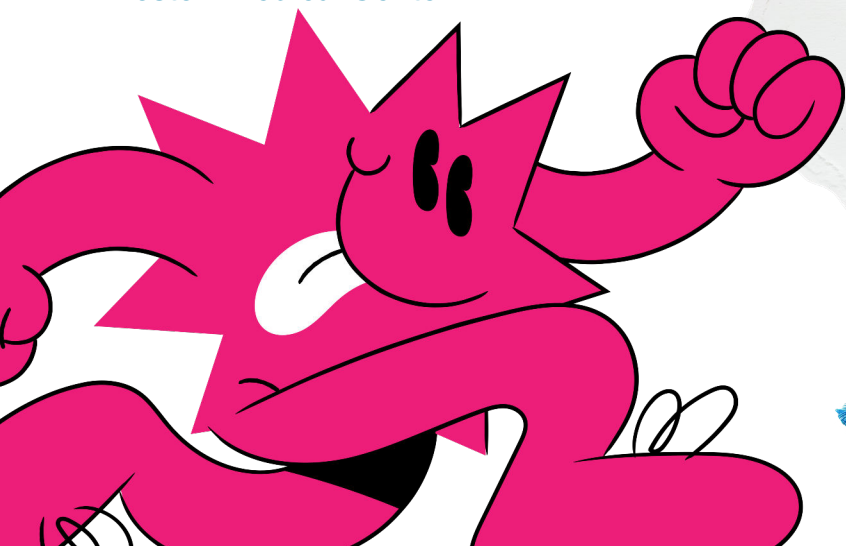
Whether you're looking forward to time outdoors, opportunities to rest and recharge, or ways to learn and grow this season, we're here to support you every step of the way.

In this edition of Development and Beyond, you'll find a wide range of resources and programs designed with your family in mind. From support groups and self-esteem programs for youth with disabilities, to local mental health services, community events, and adaptive summer programs across Massachusetts—there's something here for everyone.

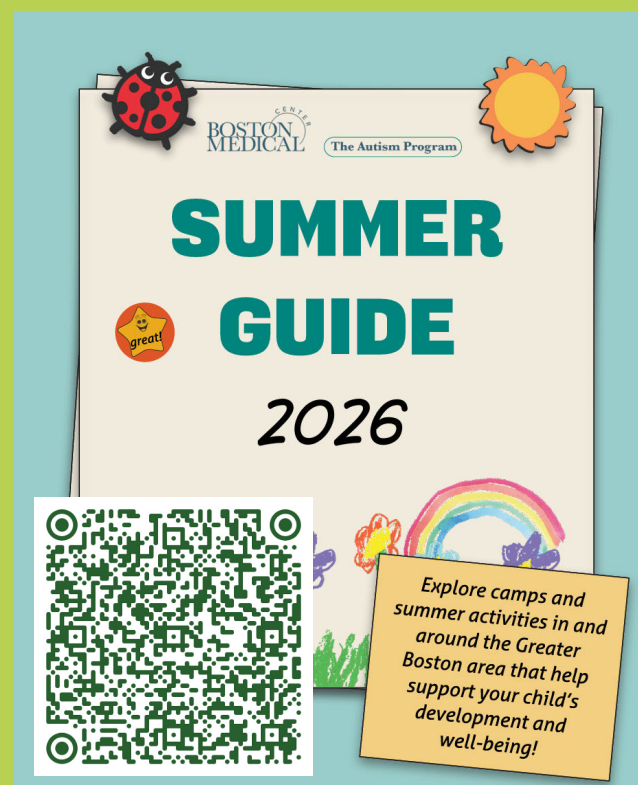
We invite you to explore what resonates with you, and we hope this month brings moments of connection, joy, and well-deserved self-care.

Warmly,

The Autism Program at
Boston Medical Center



2026 SUMMER GUIDE



This year's Summer Guide is finally here! This resource offers a comprehensive, categorized list of inclusive summer programs across Massachusetts. Included for the first time are out-of-state and adult program options. Scan the QR code or click [HERE](#) to check it out!



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.

5/13 Neurodiversity Employment Symposium

9:30am to 2:30pm | League School for Autism

Please join us on at the Old Colony YMCA in Stoughton for this symposium, where a gathering of speakers and panelists will discuss how to increase employment, develop opportunities, and provide consultation for neurodivergent members of our community. Lunch is included in the ticket price. The deadline to register is May 8th. \$25 ticket or \$50 per group of 3.

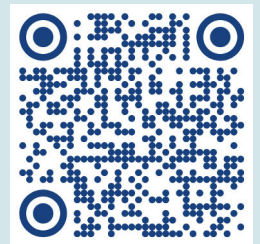


RSVP required. In-person event in Stoughton. Livestream option available.

5/18 Supporting Successful Medical Care for Patients with Disabilities

1pm | Maxwell & Eleanor Blum Patient and Family Learning Center

Join us to learn practical tips and strategies to improve healthcare access for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. We will focus on reducing anxiety and enhancing care through the use of social stories, visual supports, and individualized accommodations. A caregiver will share lived experiences navigating the healthcare system and offer insights into how visual supports can promote more successful and positive medical visits.

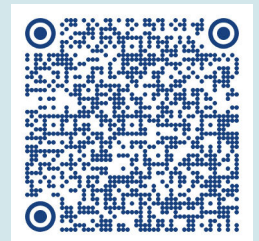


ASL interpreters provided - for special accommodations, email PFLC@partners.org.

5/19 Positive Me: Self-Esteem Series for Ages 18-22

10am to 11am | MA Developmental Disabilities Council

If you're a student with a disability between 18–22, this 6^{week} class program is a great chance to build confidence, connect with others, and learn important skills like advocacy and boundary^{setting}. Examples of content for the series includes sharing activities to identify participants' strengths, communication exercises, a "selfie" challenge to explore participants' self-image, and advocacy training to empower participants to use their voices.



RSVP required. Virtual classes.

5/20 Resources for Non-Verbal Autistic Adults

6:30pm to 7:30pm | The Lurie Center for Autism

Join Amy Levitan, MSW, LICSW, and Judith Ursitti, Co-Founder of the Profound Autism Alliance, for a virtual presentation & discussion about approaching adult support systems. For autistic individuals & their families, service gaps, caregiving demands, and financial strain often begin well before age 22. The transition out of school-based services, commonly referred to as the “services cliff,” can intensify these challenges. This presentation will offer practical strategies & expert guidance to help families plan, advocate, and build sustainable supports for the future.



RSVP required. Virtual webinar.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**, a reminder that caring for our emotional well-being is just as vital as caring for our physical health. This month, we invite patients, families, and providers to explore **local resources** and **upcoming events** that promote mental wellness, connection, and support.



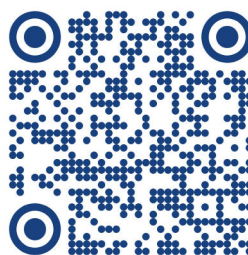
FINDING SERVICES

If you are looking for mental health services or wondering what is available near you, a good place to start is the **Massachusetts Behavioral Health Line**.

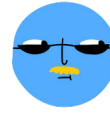
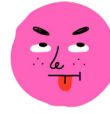
Behavioral Health Help Line offers 24/7 support for those who need it. It will connect you directly to clinical help, even if you're not sure what kind of help or treatment you may need. Free, confidential, no health insurance required, and available in 200+ languages through interpreter services.

Call or text (833) 773-2445.

BHHL also offers their **Resource Directory**, an online tool to help you find mental health, substance use treatment support services, and health-related social connections across Massachusetts. Simply search by your location and what kind of help you are looking for.



Scan this QR code or visit <https://www.masshelpline.com/bhhldirectory/> to access this resource.



5/14 4th Annual Family Mental Health & Wellness Fair

5pm to 7pm | Leominster, MA

Join this resource fair for an afternoon of community connection and resources available in areas such as physical & mental health, healthy living, substance use support, and family wellness. Come see how small steps can lead to big impact! Location: Tata Auditorium, Leominster City Hall (25 West St., Leominster, MA)

In-person event.

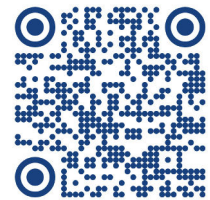


5/14 Mental Health First Aid Training

9am to 5pm | Danvers, MA with Northeast Arc

Do you want to learn how you can help adults, including those with disabilities, facing mental health crises? The Northeast Arc is offering a free series of trainings on Mental Health First Aid. During the courses you will learn common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges & substance use challenges, how to interact with someone in crisis and connect them with help. Training is available monthly from May too December and you can select your top two choices when registering for a session.

RSVP is required. In-person event.

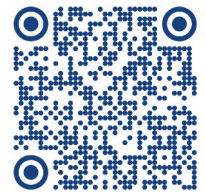


5/26 Pre-Planning for Family Mental Health Crisis

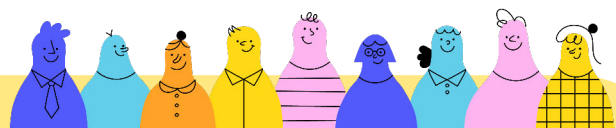
12pm to 3pm | Parent/Professional Advocacy League

Planning ahead for a mental health emergency can help make a difficult situation less stressful. PPAL provides a step-by-step guide with tools, resources and strategies in order to help families be well-prepared for a mental health crisis involving their children.

RSVP is required. Virtual event.



LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE FAIR



Your town may be hosting a mental health resource fair this month. These can be great opportunities to learn about your local organizations and resources, as well as connect with professionals who can provide support at times of need. You can look through your town's website or connect with a family support center near you to check.

coming UP



FUN STUFF & Summer Programs!

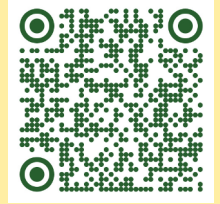
Are you ready to enjoy this beautiful weather coming up? Check out these sensory-friendly events and summer programs coming up to see if any of them fit your interests! Click title or scan QR code for more information.



5/9 [Sensory-Friendly "Animal Farm" Movie](#)

Littleton, MA

O'Neil Cinemas offers special movie nights for families of children with ASD & other disabilities to enjoy movies in a fun, friendly, and accommodating environment. This month, they will be featuring Animal Farm, Toy Story 5 for June, and Minions 4 for July. Please check the theater website for exact details on showtimes and fees.



5/10 [Sensory-Friendly Museum Sunday](#)

9am to 11am | Springfield, MA

The Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum and the Springfield Science Museum will open early with some exhibits modified to provide an opportunity for people with a range of differing abilities. Trained staff and volunteers will be on hand to answer any questions you have and, if necessary, direct you to a quiet space that provides a chance to cool down and take a break. Sensory-friendly crafts for all ages will be available in the Cat's Corner! Social stories are available as well: [Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum](#) & [Springfield Science Museum](#)



5/16 [Bill Blagg's Family Magic Show](#)

12pm to 3pm | Providence, RI

Join us for an afternoon filled with laughter, wonder and endless surprises as renowned magician Bill Blagg presents Family Magic! With over 60 minutes of non-stop magical fun, Family Magic is specifically designed to entertain and engage audiences of all ages. Prepare to be amazed as ordinary objects come to life while others vanish in the blink of an eye and you could even be chosen to float in mid-air! [Social stories](#) are available to support audience members.



5/18 [Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary](#)

10am to 1pm | Lincoln, MA

Enjoy a peaceful visit during sensory-friendly hours, when the sanctuary is closed to the public and open exclusively for individuals with autism or other sensory sensitivities. With fewer visitors, quieter trails, and a calm atmosphere, it's a chance for families, children, and adults to connect with nature and each other at their own pace in a more comfortable, less stimulating setting.

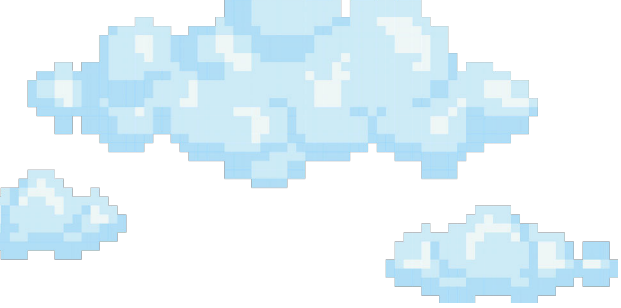


5/28 [Adaptive Kayaking](#)

11am to 3pm | Hopkinton, MA

Join the Universal Access Program's adaptive kayaking program on Hopkinton Reservoir! During this program, run by our partner All Out Adventures, paddlers will travel in small groups (pods) to explore the reservoir. Instruction, adaptive equipment, and assistance (as needed) are provided. This program is designed for people with disabilities, their families, support staff, and friends. Two time slots available: 11am - 12:30pm, or 1:15pm - 2:45pm. \$8 tickets. To register, visit AOA website [here](#), call (413) 584-2052 or email programs@alloutadventures.org.





Are you looking for inclusive summer programs for this year? We encourage you to check out our **Autism Program Summer Guide** included on page 2 of this newsletter as a first step! If you were looking for more options, here are some fantastic programs to keep an eye on. Click the **title** for more information & to register!



Special Olympics

Special Olympics is a robust sports program offered throughout the state for a diverse range of ages, abilities, and individuals. Young Athletes program is for children with & without intellectual disabilities (ages 2-7), supporting them through developing motor skills, social, emotional and learning skills, sport readiness, and friendships. Look through their website to see what they are offering this year!



**Franciscan
Children's**

So every kid can.

Franciscan Children's offers a fantastic adaptive sports program for individuals with disabilities. From baseball, basketball, bike riding, dance, gymnastics, track, to so much more, we definitely encourage you to check out their summer options!

Greater Massachusetts Special-Needs Events

Looking for more? Check out **SpedChildMass**, an awesome database of local events, programs, and opportunities all across Massachusetts for families and individuals with disabilities. They are always updating their website with new programs, so we encourage you to bookmark this website!

**CHALLENGER
SPORTS™**

Challenger Sports offers soccer programs and clinics for youth all over Massachusetts. Visit their website and search by your zip code!

Find More Programs

Your town's parks & recreation department may be hosting an inclusive summer program. Check out their website and connect with your local public library to confirm. Another great option is to connect with your local family & autism support centers, as they will likely be hosting inclusive programs and events all summer. See list of local support centers **here**.

Disability Pride Celebration at Fenway Park!



Join Fenway Park for the annual Disability Pride Celebration on Tuesday, May 26! Ticket holders who purchase through this special offer will receive an exclusive Red Sox jersey featuring the Disability Pride flag, 'RED SOX' fingerspelled in ASL, readable braille, and velcro closures!

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ISSUE 93: May 7th, 2026



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.

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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!

