

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET ACTIVITY

John Thomas, Deputy Director
The Arc of Massachusetts

On July 25 and 26, 2006 members of the Mass. House of Representatives and Senate voted to override the Governor's veto of \$2 million from the DMR Turning 22 account.

Children from the ages of 3 to 22 who are enrolled in special education, receive funding from their local city or town's education budget. If they are in residential schools, there is cost sharing between the Department of Education and the local city or town. These services, a legal entitlement, are no longer in effect once the individual reaches the age of 22. At that age, individuals must enter the adult human service system, where entitlements end, and in most cases, resources are scarce. If the person is eligible for services through the Department of Mental Retardation, they become part of that year's "Turning 22" class.

In FY2000, the T-22 class was comprised of 446 people, funded at \$6.95 million. In FY2002, while funding was cut to \$6.4 million, the class increased by almost 100 people. Funding levels have remained flat, despite a steady increase in the number of young adults aging out of special education. Last year's class numbered 620 people.

Today's unanimous bi-partisan vote was a validation that the math and human implications behind the Governor's veto didn't make sense. The vote was also an indication of the power of grassroots advocacy, as almost 700 communications flooded into the State House on this issue alone. Thanks to all the individuals and organizations that helped with this effort.

Representative Tom Sannicandro, speaking on the floor of the House this afternoon, told members: "This program helps people with intellectual disabilities live full and productive lives... it also helps disabled people live independently from their families through providing housing assistance, transitional assistance, day programs and many other necessary services." Sannicandro was instrumental in organizing building a coalition of 74 legislators who signed on to a letter sent to House Ways & Means chairman Robert DeLeo asking for the increased funds. If you would like to thank Rep. Sannicandro for his efforts, call 617-722-2090 or email at Tom.Sannicandro@state.ma.us

The Governor's veto of the Salary Reserve for Human Services Workers was also overridden unanimously in the House and Senate. The reserve is back to the 28 million dollar figure!

The House voted to override the Governor's veto of \$1 Million in new funding for Early Intervention Services!

From the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow: The legislature returned the Mercury Products Bill to the Governor's desk! He had sent it back to the legislature with amendments. The legislature made some changes to the amendments before returning the bill to his desk. The Governor now has until July 29th to sign or veto the bill.

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Family Connections Staff:

- Sandra Kinney, Program Director
- Ross Hooley, Family Advisor
- Jorge Pagan, Family Advisor
- Gloria Villalobo, Family Advisor
- Sherry Amaral, Family Advisor
- Emily Murgo Nisenbaum, Associate Executive Director
- Louis Nisenbaum, Executive Director



RESULTS!

Family Connections Satisfaction Survey

Please answer as many of the following questions as you can.

	YES, OR MOST OF THE TIME	SOME OF THE TIME	NO, OR NOT AT ALL	DON'T KNOW	DOES NOT APPLY
1. Are the supports and services you receive centered on your family and the person needing supports?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 2
2. Has Family Connections staff helped you to find or access community resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 27	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 2
3. Does staff help you figure out what you need as a family to support your family member with a disability?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 27	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 1
4. Does the program staff recognize that you know your child best, acknowledge your strengths and respect your choices and opinions?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 1
5. Do the supports offered meet your family's needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 27	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6. Are supports available to your family in a timely manner?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 28	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
7. Has Family Connections staff helped you to access and use the health care system?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 19	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 6
8. Are you satisfied with the cash assistance you receive?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 23	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 4
9. Do you feel less isolated since your involvement with Family Connections?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 21	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 3
10. Have you learned new information as a result of working with people from Family Connections?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 29	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11. Has the quality of life for you and your family member improved since your involvement with Family Connections?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 29	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 1

12. I need more information on (please give us your name if you'd like us to get back to you):

- housing 7
- education 5
- rights 5
- recreation 9
- adult services 1
- turning 22 1
- other Family Resources and Sibshops

13. Are you interested in participating in any of the following support groups (please give us your name if you'd like us to get back to you)?

- ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders) Support Group 8
- Hispanic Family Support Group
- Transition (from school to adult life) Support Group 3
- Dinner Club (gathering with other families over dinner) 6
- Other _____

14. I would like Family Connections to sponsor a training or workshop on:

- Education 7
- Advocacy 3
- Community resources 11
- Stress management 10
- Assistive technology 5
- Benefits 7
- Transition 6
- Specific disability ASD and Cortical Auditory Processing Disorder
- Other Living out of the family home

15. Are there any other supports your family would benefit from?

Social Intergration Financial Assistance Summer Camp Financial Assistance

16. I would be interested in learning more about serving on the Family Connections Advisory Council.

- Yes 5
- Not at this time 14

Comments: “This is a great program, keep up the good work; Gloria is my connection with program; this program recognizes the needs of Hispanic community; Thank you for the respite money, it helped pay for YMCA swim team; Family Connections has been a life power with school and family support. Looking forward to working with you with Turning 22; Great group of people with great information, Sandy always returns my phone calls quickly; Sandy has helped my son and myself a great deal. I am grateful for all the help and support.; Thank you for your hard work; Gloria is a excellent school resource for my son, keep up the good work; At this time I am at a good place with the supports from Family Connections.”

SAVE THE DATE!

The SouthCoast Assistive Technology Conference and EXPO

Co-Sponsored by:

ASSETS, Inc.

And

MA Assistive Technology Act Program

Thursday September 28, 2006

8:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Holiday Inn Taunton

700 Myles Standish Blvd.

Taunton, MA 02780

Highlights include:

First-hand information from assistive technology vendors

Human Service Providers and State Agencies with information on:

Daily living aids, work, travel and recreation

Nine informational panels on low-tech to high-tech assistive technology

and funding AAC devices and more

If you have questions, please contact Diane Hardin at

508-992-3128, ext. 2 or atexpo@verizon.net



ANNUAL TRAINING ON ADMINISTERING A SPECIAL NEEDS TRUST

Presented by Fredrick M. Misilo, Jr, J.D., Ed M. and Theresa M. Varnet, J.D., M.S.W. featuring Keynote Speaker Leo V. Sarkissian, M.A., L.I.C.S.W.

Saturday, September 16, 2006

9:00 a.m.-4:00p.m.

Courtyard Marriott Hotel

75 Felton Street, Marlborough, MA 02752

This annual training is essential for those called upon to handle a trust for a person with disabilities. Please join other caregivers, parents, trustees, and successor trustees of Special Needs Trusts and OBRA '93 Trusts.

Registration Fee: \$125.00 per person Must be registered no later than September 1, 2006

Questions? Call 508-459-8078

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - MASSACHUSETTS

On April 7, 2006 the governor signed H. 1123 (requiring special education Teams to address specific needs of kids on the autism spectrum). Since there is no emergency preamble with this bill, it will become effective 90 days after the Governor's signature - July 6, 2006.

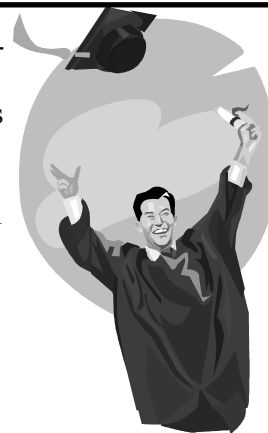
The new provision will revise the Massachusetts special education to require Teams to address an array of specific areas of need for children on the autism spectrum including, e.g., their sensory needs, their needs for development of social communication skills, their difficulties with changes in the environment, etc. All of these have certainly been the focus of many EPs developed in good faith for students over the years, but in all too many cases parents have run into stiff resistance against requests to acknowledge and address the needs described in this new law.



Among the key groups involved in this triumph were Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts (see: <http://www.afamaction.org/>) and the Autism Special Education Legal Support Center of the Mass Advocates for Children (see: http://www.massadvocates.org/autism_project).

DOE Commissioner's Update on Graduation Ceremonies

On May 22, 2006, David P. Driscoll, the MA Commissioner of Education, stated "As in previous years, I want to be certain that all of you are clear on the official Department of Education position regarding students who will be receiving certificates of attainment or local certificates participating in graduation activities and ceremonies. I hope that all students who are concluding their 12th grade year will be recognized at a memorable and positive event at which they are acknowledged for their accomplishments and encouraged to continue pursuing educational opportunities and success."



For the complete text of the update, go to <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mailings/2006/cm052206.html>

Every year students who have a disability are either denied access to this rite of passage or have to fight to take part. Nice to see a proactive strategy on the part of the policy makers!

FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WANTING TO GO TO COLLEGE!

The Concurrent Enrollment for Students with Disabilities line item was approved by the Governor in the FY 07 budget. The Concurrent Enrollment line item was funded for \$2,000,000.

7061-9600 For a discretionary grant pilot program with the purpose of providing monies to school districts and state public institutions of higher education partnering together to offer concurrent enrollment programs for students with disabilities as defined in section 1 of chapter 71B of the General Law ages 18-22; provided that said students with disabilities can be enrolled in any credit or noncredit courses that include nondisabled students; and provided further that the department, in consultation with the board of higher education shall develop guidelines to ensure that the grant program promotes civic engagement and mentoring of faculty in state institutions of higher education, and supports college success, work success, and provision of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment \$2,000,000

SUMMER FUN

Performing at the
Holiday Inn - Mansfield

GQ *and The Lady*

Featuring
Linda Calise

Sunday August 13, 2006

Entertainment from 6 to 10 p.m.
Doors Open at 5:00 p.m.

Cold and Hot Hor d'oeuvres

Raffle

This event is sponsored by the Family Leadership Network Alumni
ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT
Southeast Region - FLN

Massachusetts Families Organizing For Change

To Reserve Tickets ~~ Send check payable to:
The Nemasket Group
(please note Family Leadership Network in memo)
PO Box 61 - Raynham, MA 02768

Questions can be directed to:
Dianne Huggon at 508-823-3529 or email Dimhug@comcast.net

\$25 per person
\$200 to reserve a table for 10 people
Limited tickets sold at the door

Private Donations Gratefully Accepted.

Directions to Holiday Inn - Mansfield
FROM 495 NORTH AND SOUTH, TAKE EXIT 12, ROUTE 140 NORTH. GO TO 5TH SET OF LIGHTS;
TURN LEFT INTO THE CABOT BUSINESS PARK. STAY IN THE RIGHT LANE TO THE END.

www.mfofc.org A non-profit 501(c)(3) organization

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY!

16th SOUTHEASTERN MASS FAMILY LEADERSHIP SERIES



The Family Leadership Series focuses on supporting families and individuals to live in their communities as naturally and typically as desired. Applications from families with children or adult family

members **of any age with any disability** are encouraged. The Family Leadership Series is currently sponsored annually in five different areas of Massachusetts by the regional chapters of Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change.

The Family Leadership Series is patterned after successful family empowerment series in Minnesota and New Hampshire. The first series in Southeastern Massachusetts took place from October 1990 to March 1991; since then, over 1700 family members from across Massachusetts have completed the Family Leadership Series.

The Family Leadership Series has a two-fold purpose. The first is to offer information about “best practices” for people with disabilities. The second is to assist families in creating a vision for their family member and a process to achieve the vision by incorporating that information.

The Family Leadership Series is organized into four, two-day workshops.

The Series focuses on:

Initiative and Leadership – family members are given information on the background of the family support movement, leadership, advocacy and the significance of self-advocacy, how to effectively advocate to create change and ways to influence funding and delivery systems.

“Creating A Vision” – a number of presenters offer their perspectives on a broad range of topics: Inclusion in schools; supported employment; positive practices; community living and family support. Families are supported to “imagine better” and to create a vision, with and for their family members, that becomes a guide for their leadership and advocacy.

Policy Making at the Local, State and Federal Level – family members receive information on how to develop networks with professionals and families, how to access and control resources that affect family stress and satisfaction and how to use legislative change to procure resources.

Food and overnight lodging for each family is paid for by the Department of Mental Retardation and other state agencies, organizations and businesses. Respite/child care/nursing for family members is arranged on an as needed basis.

For more information or an application contact:

Emily Murgo Nisenbaum 508-999-4436
56 Bridge Street fax 508-997-9239
Fairhaven, MA 02719 tngemily@mfofc.org

“THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE BEAUTY OF THEIR DREAMS.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

BUILDING A HOME

A Conference on the Complex Issues Families Face in Securing Supportive Living Arrangements for their Children

Saturday, November 4, 2006 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Boston University Conference Center Tyngsboro, MA

Keynote speaker: Jay Klein, Director of The Center for Housing and New Community Economics (CHANCE) and the National Home of your Own Project

10 great workshops: Making it Happen ~ Empty Nest-Letting Go and Getting Out~ Home Control and Ownership Through Proper Estate Planning ~ Blue Print for Public and Private Partnership ~ Leaving a Legacy - Brothers and Sisters and Their Lifelong Relationship ~ Alternatives to Group Homes ~ From Dreams to Reality - Trailblazers Tell Their Stories ~ Pouring the Foundation - Friends, Family and Building Community with a Network of Support ~ Caulking, Duct Tape and Insulation - What It Takes to Fill the Gaps (SSI, PCA, food stamps and more) ~ The Bricks and Mortar to Community Development - All Types of Local, State and Federal Housing Resources and How to Access Them.

In collaboration with Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, Arc of East Middlesex, Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation, Autism Support Center, DMR Northeast Region

INTERESTED? CALL FAMILY CONNECTIONS @ 508-999-0077 FOR A BROCHURE

THE NEMASKET GROUP

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Joint Project of The Nemasket Group and DMR

56 Bridge Street

Fairhaven, MA 02719

Phone: 508-999-0077

Fax: 508-997-9239



***Creating a network of family support
for individuals with developmental
disabilities and their families***

