



NewsLine

The Federation for Children with Special Needs

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Family Opportunity Act of 2001 Introduced

Senator Edward Kennedy (Mass) and Senator Chuck Grassley (Iowa) introduced the Family Opportunity Act of 2001 (S-321) on February 8. Representative Pete Sessions (Texas) and Henry Waxman (Calif.) also introduced a house version of the bill (HR 600). The Act will make health insurance coverage more widely available for children with significant disabilities, through opportunities to buy-in to Medicaid at an affordable rate. In addition, it will encourage states to develop a demonstration program to provide a Medicaid buy-in for children who have potentially significant disabilities, and who will become severely disabled without needed health services. Under the Act, states will have greater flexibility to offer children with disabilities needed health services at home and in their communities. Finally, Family-to-Family Information Centers will be established in each state to help parents with special needs children.

Families are encouraged to contact their congressmen regarding the importance of the Family Opportunity Act. For more information, contact the Family Voices office at the Federation.



Federation staff Kathy Cruz, Nora Wells, Betsy Anderson, Polly Sherman, Barbara Popper (not pictured), Peggy Curran (not pictured), and Rich Robison had the pleasure of recognizing Senator Kennedy at the Family Voices Conference in Washington, D.C. on February 8.

U.S. DOE Visits Federation

In late fall of 2000, staff from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education conducted a site visit at the Federation to perform a thorough review of the Federation's Parent Training and Information (PTI) project. Federation staff shared their issues, activities and accomplishments of the last few years. At the end of the day, the staff was quite pleased by what a positive experience the visit had been. Below is a summary of OSEP's findings:

In the mid-1990s, the Federation faced some serious challenges . . . [Since that time,] however, the Federation made some changes that have made it stronger than ever.

- Greater emphasis on diversity, particularly for serving Spanish and Portuguese-speaking families. Statewide outreach coordinators have been hired for these two communities.
- Increasing use of state-of-the-art technology,
- Adoption and implementation of a Strategic Plan,
- More commitment to measuring progress towards that Strategic Plan,
- Greater emphasis on development, including hiring a Director of Development,
- A sound auditor's report,
- A greater emphasis on diversifying funding resources,
- Move to high quality offices in Roxbury, a minority community.

"In the mid-1990s, the Federation faced some serious challenges . . . [Since that time,] however, the Federation made some changes that have made it stronger than ever. In turn, the PTI appears to be providing quality services to the parents of Massachusetts. Major accomplishments have been:

The Massachusetts PTI appears well-poised to provide services in the 21st Century."

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Bulletin

Parents Learning About Children's Education

Legislative & Policy Update

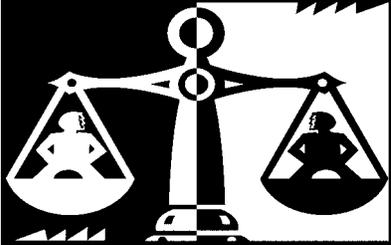
Bush Announces No Child Left Behind/ New Freedom Initiatives

President George W. Bush announced his education agenda shortly after taking office in January. This “education blueprint” called “No Child Left Behind” identifies a new federal role in education. The plan proposes that the federal government “give those responsible latitude and support while holding those responsible accountable for producing results.” Bush’s agenda will focus on: increased accountability, identifying what works, reduced bureaucracy, and empowering parents.

Many of the Bush changes are proposed to become part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which is up for debate in the Congress this session. Key components of the re-authorization will include:

- a) closing the achievement gap through accountability and high standards, annual academic assessments, and consequences for schools that fail;
- b) improving literacy by putting reading first, with a focus on reading in the early grades, and early childhood reading instruction;
- c) reducing the bureaucracy by expanding flexibility with Title I programs, increasing funding for school technology, eliminating overlapping grant programs, and providing more flexibility to state and local school agencies;
- d) rewarding success and sanctioning failure by rewarding improved student achievement, offering bonuses to states that meet account-

ability requirements, providing “No Child Left Behind” bonuses for school progress in the achievement of disadvantaged students, and reducing federal funding to states that fail to meet their improvement objectives;

- e) promoting parental choice by providing parents with reports on the performance of schools, enhanced funding for charter schools, and establishing grant programs to increase parental choice;
- 
- f) improving teacher quality through establishing high standards for professional development, strengthening math and science education; and finally,
 - g) making schools safer through establishing teacher protection programs, expanding after-school program options including using religious organizations, rescuing students from unsafe schools, and supporting character education.

In addition, to address the specific needs of Americans with disabilities, President Bush has proposed a “New Freedom Initiative.” President Bush states, “My New Freedom Initiative will help Americans with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, increasing the ability of Americans with disabilities to integrate into the workforce, and promoting increased access into daily community life.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a powerful civil rights law. The President realizes that this law has ensured improved access to employment, public and commercial facilities, telecommunications services, technology and schools. However, more progress must be made because 1 in 5 adults with disabilities has not graduated from high school. The president has proposed to increase funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to address concerns in this area.

It is our hope that President Bush’s education reforms combined with his New Freedom Initiative will provide the educational supports needed by children with disabilities to ensure their access to a quality education that prepares them to be active and valued members of their communities.

Celluci, Swift Resolved to use MCAS

Since 1993, Massachusetts has been undergoing education reform efforts to ensure that all students in the Commonwealth receive a quality education regardless of socio-economic factors, race or disability. To measure the success of these efforts the state implemented the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The MCAS not only tests the performance of each student, but also measures how well teachers and school districts do their job.

In January, Governor Cellucci and Lt. Governor Swift stated that they, “remain firm in their resolve to use the MCAS test as a graduation requirement,” but realize education reform continues to need “fine-tuning.” To provide students a fair opportunity to demonstrate their academic achievement, they announced several changes in the MCAS, particularly as they relate to students with disabilities. These include:

- Expanded list of allowable testing accommodations and recognition of the importance of the

IEP team’s role in identifying accommodations for students.

- Establishment of a regional appeals process to review whether a district gave adequate accommodations to special needs students who failed to meet the graduation standard.
- Certificate of Completion for the student who has fulfilled IEP goals, but the severity of the student’s disability prevents him from being capable of passing. This Certificate will recognize the student’s achievement and hard work.
- Focused retests for students who did not pass MCAS the first time, but who have good school attendance and have participated in extra help programs. Questions on the focused retest will target fundamental knowledge only and will be geared to the minimum passing score of 220. Students who take a focused retest will not be able to score in the proficient or advanced categories. Students may retest up to four times.

Special Ed PACs

School districts must continue to establish and assist special education Parent Advisory Councils (PACs). Changes were made in the Massachusetts special education law last summer to ensure that PACs are maintained. The legislature recognized the importance of parents’ expertise and experience and changed the law to ensure that PACs continue to advise school committees and meet regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the district’s special education programs. School districts are now required to provide annual parents’ rights workshops in conjunction with the PAC. Your PAC can play a key role in your community and can also help to ensure that parents receive timely information about the state’s new MCAS policies (See article, p. 5.).

From the Executive Director

It's Important to Include Students with Disabilities in MCAS

This article was originally submitted to the Boston Globe op-ed section in January 2001.

Governor Cellucci and Lt. Governor Swift have recently proposed new ways to accommodate students with disabilities who take the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The MCAS 2000 test scores indicated that students who receive special education services on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or accommodations through a Section 504 plan failed the 10th grade Math and English assessments at twice the rate of their non-disabled peers. Despite these scores, it is important to continue to include students with disabilities in the MCAS. Here are four reasons why:

- **The law requires it.** Federal and state laws require the full participation of students with disabilities. IDEA-97, the federal special education law explicitly requires the participation of students with disabilities in the general curriculum, with appropriate supports and services. In addition, the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 requires that students with disabilities be assessed through the MCAS.
- **Students who are tested get taught and receive the necessary resources and supports to improve their academic performance.** If students with disabilities are excluded from testing, or if their scores do not count, there will be little incentive for school districts to provide them with the necessary instruction and resources to improve educational outcomes. IEP goals must focus on improving student academic performance.
- **Participation in standardized assessments demonstrates student progress.** In the past, large-scale assessments were not considered important for students with disabilities. It was assumed that individual special education evaluations provided sufficient data on how well students were doing. However, special education assessments have not provided information on what students know and how they perform relative to the general curriculum. Participation in MCAS will provide that information.
- **Individuals with disabilities will have a brighter employment future.** Over the past

25 years, students with disabilities have completed their educational programs and often been granted diplomas, but they lack basic skills for even entry-level employment. Despite almost full employment in Massachusetts, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is about 75%. Raising the expectations for *all* students helps to enhance the employability of students with disabilities.

Legislative proposals are emerging to exempt students with disabilities from participation in MCAS. The Federation believes this would be wrong and offers three alternative policy recommendations:

This is the era of large-scale testing. Students with disabilities must be included with appropriate supports and accommodations or they will lose out.

- **First, as the Governor has now recognized, the Massachusetts Department of Education needs to revise its guidelines to ensure school districts utilize *all* of the accommodations necessary and required by a student's IEP so the student can truly demonstrate his or her knowledge on the test.** School districts are required by law to allow students with disabilities to utilize appropriate accommodations, as outlined in their IEP or 504 Plan, for testing purposes. However, this provision was not consistently implemented during the first rounds of MCAS and may have negatively affected student performance.
- **Second, the Board of Education must recognize the alternate form of MCAS as a valid demonstration of student progress for those students who can achieve at high levels despite their disability.** School districts are required to allow students, who are otherwise unable to take the MCAS using accommodations, to take an alternate form of



Richard Robison

the MCAS. The State will introduce the Alternate MCAS this spring. Then a student with a disability may be able to demonstrate a high level of performance on the alternate MCAS assessment, whereas she may not be able to participate in the "standard" assessment, even with accommodations. Students who pass using the MCAS-ALT should receive a standard diploma.

- **Third, the Governor's proposed "Certificate of Completion" should be utilized on a very limited scale.** Local school districts do need to develop additional ways to recognize and encourage the accomplishments of students with disabilities even when they are not able to pass MCAS. A limited number of students with severe disabilities will remain in school until their 22nd birthday. Though they have fully participated in their school program, they may not be able to meet the basic competency requirement for graduation, even if they had been given every conceivable opportunity to participate in and pass the MCAS. Still, they deserve appropriate recognition and receiving a Certificate may accomplish that.

This is the era of large-scale testing. Students with disabilities must be included with appropriate supports and accommodations or they will lose out. Even if the MCAS test itself evolves or changes in the future, *all* students still must be tested. Exempting or excluding groups of students on the basis of their disability will not fix the test. Rather it will undermine their opportunity to learn, violate their civil rights and seriously harm the quality of their education.

Richard J. Robison

Richard J. Robison is the Executive Director of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, and is also the parent of two children with Down syndrome who participated in MCAS last year.



Ask Eileen

Empowerment Through Information

by Eileen Souza,
Federation Information Specialist

This column highlights questions that Eileen and the other Federation Information Specialists are most frequently asked.

Dear Eileen,
I am confused. There have been so many different sets of special education regulations over the past year, and I don't know which regulations are currently in effect and where I can find them. Can you help me?

You are not alone in your confusion. I have heard this question many times over the past few months from both parents and professionals. In fact, the Board of Education has issued three sets of special education regulations in the past year. You can find the current regulations on the Federation's home page at www.fcsn.org under the heading "Special Education Regulations."

Although these regulations went into effect in late December 2000, they are being referred

to as the "January Regulations." Don't assume that professionals and school personnel have the most up-to-date information. When you are discussing special education regulations make sure that you state that you are referencing the "January Regulations." This may help to avoid needless misunderstandings.

There are a number of important points to make note of in these "January Regulations." For example, according to the "January Regulations," a student with a disability that requires one or more related services in order to access the general curriculum is eligible for special education and, therefore, should receive services under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) instead of a 504 Plan. Additionally, the "January Regulations" maintain many previously existing protections for children with disabilities, including the 45-day timeline for the development of the IEP and provision of services, the IEP Team's right to determine the specific placement of a student, the transporta-

tion protections and requirements, the rights surrounding extended day programs, the parent consent and native language requirements, the parental right to observe programs, the program and safety requirements for private special education schools, the definition of parent, and waiver requirements. There are also new regulations regarding the right to Independent Educational Evaluations.

If you are interested in learning more about the "January Regulations" but reading the regulations from cover-to-cover is not appealing to you, I recommend that you attend one of the Federation's "Basic Rights" workshops. The Federation will be conducting close to one hundred of these workshops across the state this school year. For a listing of upcoming workshops, see page 10. Also, updated Information Briefs pertaining to the "January Regulations" will be posted on the Federation's website soon.



2001 Summer Camp Directory: A Listing of Day and Residential Summer Camp Programs

Published annually by the Federation, the Summer Camp Directory booklet provides information on 80 day and residential summer camps, plus a listing of local community resources. It provides guidelines for selecting a camp, and suggestions for including children with disabilities in regular camps.

SEE PAGE 13 FOR ORDERING INFORMATION!

For Sale One bedroom condominium in Brookline, Massachusetts for young adults with special needs/mild developmental disabilities. Great location with built-in closets and skylights in household of fun-loving working people. 24-hour staffing pattern when residents are at home. Managed by Specialized Housing Inc. (SHI) which consults with families, individuals and groups to create supportive housing opportunities for adults with disabilities in condominiums and apartments in Brookline, Cambridge, Arlington, Newton, and Providence, RI.

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State Changes Policy Regarding Provision of MCAS Accommodations

State eliminates list of accommodations previously referred to as “non-allowable”

The Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) has issued a revised policy on providing Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test accommodations to students with disabilities, bringing state policy into compliance with federal special education law. In accordance with the new policy, *the state has eliminated its list of accommodations previously referred to as “non-allowable.”* IEP Teams (or 504 Teams) may now consider the full range of accommodations necessary for a student with a disability to participate in MCAS. The Department’s new policy, effective immediately, is a critical step to help ensure that students with disabilities participate fully and fairly in MCAS, the statewide test that all tenth graders must pass in order to graduate. (For more detailed information, visit the DOE website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas.)

Accommodations provided for MCAS should generally be consistent with accommodations provided as part of the child’s routine classroom instruction. Examples of accommodations for students with disabilities that are now *allowed* by the state in certain circumstances if determined necessary by the IEP Team include:

- Reading aloud the English Language Arts (ELA) reading test to a student who is blind and does not read Braille, or to a student with a severe learning disability, which impacts a student’s ability to read.
- Interpreting (though American Sign Language) the ELA reading test to a student when the student is deaf and requires interpretation in order to have access to the test.
- Use of a calculator, number chart/table on the math test due to a severe learning disability, which impacts a student’s ability in mathematics.
- Use of a scribe, “speech-to-text” conversion software, or tape recorder for ELA composition (essay) if students are unable to write manually due to a physical disability or severe learning disability, which impacts a student’s ability in writing.
- Use of a word processor with the spell-check or grammar-check function when writing the

ELA composition if students have severe language disability.

Students who pass the grade 10 English and math MCAS tests using “standard” or “non-standard” accommodations *will* earn a competency determination and meet the state’s graduation requirement. The examples listed above are called “non-standard” accommodations, which may alter what the test measures. “Standard” accommodations, which do not change what the test measures include changes in: 1) timing or schedule of the test; 2) test setting; 3) test presentation; or 4) student response to test question. DOE will maintain

If you are the parent of a student with disabilities in grades 3 to 10, it is important to consider whether your child may require accommodations that were previously prohibited by DOE.

a record of students in each school and district taking the MCAS with “non-standard” accommodations to ensure that these accommodations are used appropriately and only when necessary.

In April-May of this year, MCAS will be administered to students, including *all* students with disabilities, in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.¹

If you are the parent of a student with disabilities in grades 3 to 10, it is important to consider whether your child may require accommodations that were previously prohibited by DOE. In light of this new policy, the Department of Education has directed school districts to consider revising IEPs and reconvening IEP Teams *before* MCAS is administered in April 2001. Therefore, in accordance with DOE policy, school districts should take the following steps to implement the new MCAS accommodations policy:

- If the IEP Team previously determined that your child needed MCAS accommodations, the district should review your child’s IEP to

determine if your child needs additional accommodations that are provided to the student for classroom instruction but were prohibited under previous state policy (e.g., a calculator, spell-check, or reader).

- If the IEP Team previously determined that your child required an “alternate assessment” to participate in MCAS, the district should review this decision to determine if your child required an alternate assessment because he or she needed accommodations that were prohibited under previous Department policy (e.g., a reader or scribe for the English test).
- If, based on this review, the district proposes to provide new MCAS accommodations for your child it must provide you with written notice describing the proposed changes in administering MCAS, the reasons for the changes, and your right to request a Team meeting to discuss the MCAS changes.
- The district must obtain the parent’s signature on an IEP amendment in order to change the MCAS accommodations provided.
- Accommodations included in a student’s IEP should be used as part of the child’s routine classroom instruction in most instances. Accommodations should not alter, simplify, or eliminate any test item, nor should accommodations provide verbal or other clues that suggest correct responses to a student.

You have the right to request a TEAM meeting to discuss MCAS accommodations. If you think it is appropriate to reconsider MCAS accommodations for your child in light of the new state policy, it is important to request a TEAM meeting immediately to make sure that any changes are included in your child’s IEP before MCAS is administered in April.

The Department of Education should be acknowledged for revising its MCAS accommodations policy to address equity concerns raised by parents of children with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth. This new policy provides important safeguards to address the needs of students with disabilities when MCAS is administered. Remember, federal law also guarantees your child access to the general education curriculum. Your child’s IEP must also ensure that he or she has the chance to learn the academic curriculum covered by MCAS.

1. MCAS administration grades and subject areas include: grade 3-reading; grade 4-English language arts, math; grade 5-science, history; grade 6-math; grade 7-English language arts; grade 8-English language arts, math, history, science; grade 9-science tryout; grade 10-English language arts, math, history, science tryout

El Estado Cambia Política Relacionada con la Provisión de Acomodaciones para el MCAS

El Estado elimina lista de acomodaciones que previamente se conocían como “no-permisibles”

El Departamento de Educación de Massachusetts (DOE) ha emitido una política revisada sobre el examen conocido como Sistema Comprensivo de Evaluación de Massachusetts (MCAS) para estudiantes con discapacidades, poniendo la ley estatal de acuerdo con la ley federal de educación especial. De acuerdo con la nueva política, *el estado ha eliminado su lista de acomodaciones conocida previamente como “no-permisible.”* Equipos de IEP (o Equipos de 504) ahora pueden considerar una gran gama de acomodaciones necesarias para un estudiante con una discapacidad para participar del MCAS. La nueva política del departamento, que tiene efecto inmediatamente, es un paso crítico para asegurar que los estudiantes con discapacidades participen completamente y equitativamente en el MCAS, el examen estatal que todos los estudiantes de décimo grado tienen que pasar para poder graduarse. (Para información con más detalles, visite la página electrónica de DOE al www.doe.mass.edu/mcas).

Las acomodaciones para el MCAS generalmente deben ser consistentes con las acomodaciones provistas como parte de la instrucción rutinaria del niño en el salón de clase. Ejemplos de acomodaciones para estudiantes con discapacidades que ahora son *permisibles* por el estado en ciertas circunstancias, si es determinado como necesario por el Equipo de IEP, incluyen:

- Leer en voz alta el examen de lectura de Arte del Lenguaje Inglés (ALI) a un estudiante que es ciego y no lee Braille, o a un estudiante que tiene una discapacidad de aprendizaje severa que afecta su habilidad para leer.
- Interpretar (a través de lenguaje de señales) el examen de lectura de ALI a un estudiante cuando es sordo y requiere interpretación para poder tener acceso al examen.
- Usar una calculadora, o una tabla numérica en el examen de matemáticas por causa de una discapacidad de aprendizaje severa que afecta la habilidad del estudiante para las matemáticas.

- Usar un escriba, un programa de computador que convierta la “voz en texto,” o una grabadora para la composición (ensayo) de ALI si los estudiantes están inhabilitados para escribir con las manos debido a una discapacidad física o una discapacidad de aprendizaje severa la cual afecta la habilidad del estudiante para escribir.

Si usted es el padre de familia de un estudiante con discapacidades en grados 3 al 10, es importante que considere si su niño pueda requerir acomodaciones que fueron prohibidas anteriormente por DOE.

- Usar un procesador de palabras con corrector de ortografía o una función de revisión de gramática al escribir la composición de ALI si los estudiantes tiene una discapacidad de lenguaje severo.

Los estudiantes de grado décimo que pasen los exámenes de MCAS en las áreas de inglés y matemáticas usando acomodaciones “estándar” o “no-estándar,” *ganarán* una determinación de competente y cumplirán con el requisito que el estado exige para graduarse. Los ejemplos presentados anteriormente son llamados acomodaciones “no-estándar,” las cuales pueden alterar lo que el examen evalúa. Acomodaciones “estándar,” las cuales no cambian lo que el examen evalúa incluyen cambios en: 1) tiempo u horario para el examen; 2) lugar del examen; 3) presentación del examen; o 4) respuesta del estudiante a la pregunta. DOE mantendrá un registro de estudiantes en cada escuela y cada distrito tomando el MCAS con acomodaciones “no-estándar” para asegurar que éstas acomodaciones son usadas apropiadamente y sólo cuando son necesarias.

En abril-mayo de este año, el MCAS será administrado a los estudiantes, incluyendo *todos* los estudiantes con discapacidades, en los grados 3,4,5,6,7,8,9 y 10.¹

Si usted es el padre de familia de un estudiante con discapacidades en grados 3 al 10, es importante que considere si su niño pueda requerir acomodaciones que fueron prohibidas anteriormente por DOE. Basados en esta nueva política, el Departamento de Educación ha dado instrucciones a los distritos escolares para que consideren revisar los IEPs y reconvocar los Equipos de IEP *antes* de que el MCAS sea administrado en abril del 2001. Por lo tanto, de acuerdo con la política de DOE, los distritos escolares deben seguir los siguientes pasos para implementar la nueva política sobre acomodaciones para el MCAS:

- Si el Equipo de IEP determinó previamente que su niño necesitaba acomodaciones para el MCAS, el distrito debe revisar el IEP de su niño para determinar si su niño necesita acomodaciones adicionales que son provistas al estudiante para la instrucción en el salón de clase pero fueron prohibidas bajo políticas estatales previas (ejemplo: una calculadora, un corrector de ortografía, o un lector).
- Si el Equipo de IEP determinó previamente que su niño requería una “evaluación alternativa” para participar en el MCAS, el distrito debe revisar esta decisión para determinar si su niño requería una evaluación alternativa porque el/ella necesitaba acomodaciones que fueron prohibidas bajo políticas del Departamento previas (ejemplo: un lector o un escriba para el examen de inglés).
- Si, basado en esta revisión, el distrito propone proveer nuevas acomodaciones para el MCAS para su niño, éste tiene que notificarle por escrito describiendo los cambios propuestos en la administración del MCAS, las razones para los cambios, y su derecho de solicitar una reunión de Equipo para discutir los cambios relacionados con el MCAS.

Estado Muda o Regulamento com Relação aos Termos das Adaptações para o Teste MCAS

Estado elimina lista de adaptações previamente referidas como “não permitido”

O Departamento de Educação de Massachusetts (DOE) divulgou o regulamento revisado sobre as adaptações para o teste do Sistema de Avaliação Extensiva de Massachusetts (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System - MCAS) para os alunos portadores de deficiência, fazendo com que o estado, assim, esteja em conformidade com a lei federal de educação especial. De acordo com esse novo regulamento, *o estado eliminou a lista com itens previamente referidos como “não permitido”*. As Juntas do IEP (IEP Teams) ou as Juntas do § de lei 504 (504 Teams) podem, agora, considerar uma larga variedade de adaptações necessárias ao estudante com deficiência que participará do MCAS. Esse novo regulamento do Departamento de Educação, imediatamente efetivado, é um passo crucial para que se assegure que os alunos portadores de deficiência participem inteira e legitimamente do MCAS, o teste estadual que todos os alunos do curso secundário (10th graders) devem passar para que obtenham o diploma. (Para informações mais detalhadas, visite o “website” do DOE: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas)

As adaptações fornecidas pelo MCAS devem, geralmente, ser consistentes com as mesmas adaptações que a criança recebe como parte da rotina de instrução na sala de aula. Exemplos de adaptações para estudantes com deficiência que são agora *permitidas* pelo estado, em certas circunstâncias, desde de que determinadas como necessárias pela Junta (IEP Team), incluem:

- Ler em voz alta o teste de Inglês (English Language Arts – ELA): para o aluno cego e que não saiba ler em Braille, ou para o aluno com grave deficiência de aprendizagem, a qual impede sua habilidade de ler.
- Interpretar (através da Linguagem de Sinais Americana – American Sign Language) o teste de leitura de Inglês (ELA) para o aluno que seja surdo e que precise da interpretação para ter acesso ao teste.

- Uso de uma calculadora, gráfico ou quadro numérico para o teste de Matemática, em razão de uma deficiência de aprendizagem severa que comprometa a habilidade do aluno nessa disciplina.
- Auxílio de um escritor, um programa de computador que converta a fala em texto, ou um gravador para a composição

Se você é o pai ou a mãe de um estudante com deficiência nas séries 3.a à 10.a, é importante que você considere se a sua criança deve requisitar adaptações que eram proibidas anteriormente pelo DOE.

(redação) se os alunos não são aptos a escrever manualmente, devido a uma deficiência física ou severa deficiência de aprendizagem, que comprometa a sua habilidade para a escrita.

- Uso do processador de textos “Word” que disponha do corretor ortográfico, para que o estudante, com grave deficiência de linguagem, escreva a sua redação de Inglês.

Os estudantes que passarem nos testes de Inglês e de Matemática do MCAS para a 10.a série (grade 10), utilizando-se de adaptações “padrões” ou “não-padrões”, *receberão* uma determinação de competência, estando qualificados para os requerimentos de graduação do estado. Os exemplos listados acima são chamados de adaptações “não-padrões” (“non-standard”), as quais podem alterar o que o teste mede. Adaptações “padrões” (“standard”), as que não alteram o que o teste

mede, incluem mudanças em: 1) na duração ou no dia e hora do teste; 2) na determinação (do modo, do ambiente...) do teste; 3) na apresentação do teste; ou 4) na resposta (reação) do aluno às questões do teste. O DOE manterá um registro de alunos em cada escola e distrito que realizam o MCAS com adaptações “não-padrões” para garantir que essas adaptações sejam usadas adequadamente e apenas quando necessárias.

Em abril-maio deste ano, o teste MCAS será administrado aos estudantes, incluindo *todos* os alunos portadores de deficiência, nas séries 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 e 10.¹

Se você é o pai ou a mãe de um estudante com deficiência nas séries 3.a à 10.a, é importante que você considere se a sua criança deve requisitar adaptações que eram proibidas anteriormente pelo DOE. Sob a luz desse novo regulamento, o Departamento de Educação tem direcionado os distritos escolares a considerar a revisão dos IEPs e a reconvocar as Juntas do IEP (IEP Teams) *antes* que o MCAS seja administrado em abril de 2001. Assim, de acordo com o regulamento do DOE, os distritos escolares devem tomar os seguintes passos para implementar as novas normas de adaptação do MCAS:

- Se a Junta havia determinado que o seu filho(a) precisava de adaptações para o MCAS, o distrito deve rever o IEP do seu filho(a) para determinar se ele(a) precisa de adaptações adicionais, que são fornecidas em sala de aula, mas que eram proibidas no antigo regulamento do estado (p. ex. calculadora e corretor de texto).
- Se a Junta havia determinado que o seu filho(a) requisitasse uma “avaliação alternativa” para participar do MCAS, o distrito deve rever essa decisão para determinar se ele(a) assim o fez porque precisava de adaptações que eram proibidas sob o regulamento prévio do Departamento (p. ex. um leitor ou um escritor para o teste de Inglês).

Acomodaciones para el MCAS

continuado de página 6 ←

- El distrito tiene que obtener la firma del padre en un IEP corregido para poder cambiar las acomodaciones provistas para el MCAS.
- Las acomodaciones incluídas en el IEP de un estudiante deben ser usadas como parte de la instrucción rutinaria del niño en el salón de clase en la mayoría de los casos. Las acomodaciones no deben alterar, simplificar o eliminar ningún aspecto del exámen, ni deben proveer pistas

verbales o de otra clase que sugieran respuestas correctas a un estudiante.

Usted tiene el derecho de solicitar una reunión de Equipo para discutir las acomodaciones del MCAS. Si cree que es apropiado reconsiderar acomodaciones para el MCAS para su niño basado en la nueva política estatal, es importante que solicite una reunión de Equipo inmediatamente para asegurarse que cualquier cambio esté incluído en el IEP de su niño antes de que el MCAS sea administrado en abril.

El Departamento de Educación debe ser reconocido por revisar su política sobre acomodaciones para el MCAS, para atender con equidad las preocupaciones de los padres de

niños con discapacidades en el Estado. Esta política nueva provee seguridades importantes que atienden las necesidades de estudiantes con discapacidades cuando el MCAS es administrado. Recuerde que la ley federal también garantiza el acceso de su niño al currículo de educación general. El IEP de su niño también tiene que asegurar que él tendrá la oportunidad de aprender el currículo académico cubierto por el MCAS.

1. Los grados y las áreas en que el MCAS es administrado incluyen: Grado 3-lectura; grado 4-Artes del Language Inglés, matemáticas; grado 5-ciencias, historia; grado 6-matemáticas; grado 7-Artes del Language Inglés; grado 8-inglés, matemáticas, historia, ciencias; grado 9-prueba de ciencias; grado 10-Artes del Language Inglés, matemáticas, historia, prueba de ciencias.

Adaptações para o Teste MCAS

continuação da página 7 ←

- Se, baseado nessa revisão, o distrito se propõe a providenciar novas adaptações para o seu filho(a), o mesmo (o distrito) deve lhe fornecer uma nota por escrito, descrevendo as mudanças propostas para a administração do MCAS, as razões para as mudanças, e o seu direito de solicitar uma reunião da Junta (Team meeting) para discutir as mudanças do MCAS.
- O distrito deve obter sua assinatura numa emenda do IEP para que sejam efetuadas as mudanças para as adaptações do MCAS.
- As adaptações incluídas no IEP do estudante devem ser usadas, em geral, como parte da instrução de rotina da sala de aula da criança. As adaptações não devem alterar, simplificar, ou eliminar

nenhum item do teste, nem devem, também, fornecer dicas verbais ou de qualquer outro tipo que possam sugerir as respostas corretas.

Você tem o direito de solicitar uma reunião da Junta (Team meeting) para discutir sobre as adaptações do MCAS. Se você pensa que é apropriado reconsiderar as adaptações do MCAS para a sua criança, sob a luz do novo regulamento do estado, é importantíssimo solicitar uma reunião da Junta imediatamente, para garantir que toda mudança seja incluída no IEP de sua criança, antes que o MCAS seja administrado em abril.

O Departamento de Educação deve ser reconhecido por rever suas normas de adaptação para o MCAS e por expressar as preocupações com a equidade, levantadas pelos pais de crianças com necessidades especiais, por toda a Comunidade. Este novo regulamento fornece salvaguardas importantes para que se verbalizem as necessidades dos estudantes com deficiência quando o MCAS é administrado. Lembre-se, a lei federal também garante o

acesso de seu filho(a) ao currículo geral de educação. O IEP do seu filho(a) também deve assegurar que ele ou ela tenha a oportunidade de aprender o currículo acadêmico coberto pelo MCAS.

1. As séries e disciplinas administradas pelo MCAS são: 3.a: leitura; 4.a: inglês e matemática; 5.a: ciência e história; 6.a: matemática; 7.a: inglês; 8.a: inglês, matemática, história e ciência; 9.a: experimentação em ciências; 10.a: inglês, matemática, história, experimentação em ciências.

Lawrence Kotin, Esq., Robert K. Crabtree, Esq., Richard F. Howard, Esq.

Providing representation to children and adults with disabilities, their families, and non-profit service providers.

Kotin, Crabtree & Strong, LLP

Kotin, Crabtree & Strong is a general practice law firm, one of whose specialties is in law relating to children, including education and child care issues. Other areas of practice include disability issues, civil and criminal litigation, administrative proceedings, personal injury law, estate planning, intellectual property, corporations, including representation of private schools and programs, child care and other organizations, health care administration, real estate, and taxation.

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Facing the Challenge: Behavioral Barriers in Children with Developmental Disabilities

Presented by

Franciscan Children's Hospital
&
Boston University School of Medicine

Friday, March 30, 2001

Keynote Speaker

Jean Frazier, MD, McLean Hospital

8am to 4pm

Sheraton Needham Hotel, Needham,
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CEU's will be available

\$150 before February 28, \$160.00 after

A limited number of registrations will be reserved for parents of children with special needs and students at a reduced rate of \$75.00.

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(617) 254-3800 ext. 1510



Sandy Blanes, right, receives her award from *A Notícia*.

***A Notícia* honors Federation staffer Sandy Blanes**

In December 2000, the Brazilian newspaper *A Notícia* presented Sandy Blanes, Outreach Coordinator for Portuguese-speaking families at the Federation with an award for her work with the Brazilian Community in New England, especially with parents of children with special needs. This Portuguese-language paper is committed to providing information about the services available to Brazilians that will help them transition to a new culture. Sandy's work at the Federation is featured each month, and each week Sandy writes a column for the Parents' PLACE project at the Federation. The award, a Brazilian sculpture made and imported just for the occasion, was presented to Sandy at an event celebrating one year of circulation. Other awardees included Boston Ballet's first Brazilian ballerina, Pollyanna, and Joint Consul of the Brazilian Consulate, Marcia Loureiro.

Long-time Federation friend Jack Rennie passes

Parents of children with disabilities are saddened by the death of our friend Jack Rennie, chairman of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education. Jack was an early leader of the education reform movement in this state and inspired other business leaders to join him. Most important to us at the Federation, Jack concentrated on benefits for individual children and recognized that problems in our public schools have not been caused by special education or by the presence of children with disabilities.

We hope Jack's vision and his commitment to better education for all our children will inspire his business colleagues, his university friends, government leaders, parents, and the general public to continue the hard work of bringing our public schools into the 21st century for the benefit of our children and the future strength of our democracy.

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Cellucci, Swift Convene Commission on School Readiness

On February 13, 2001, Governor Cellucci and Lt. Governor Swift held the first meeting of its 53-member Commission on School Readiness. The commission is charged with making recommendations to the Governor about how to improve the current system of early childhood services (birth to 5). Commission responsibilities include:

- identifying methods for measuring the effectiveness of current programs for delivering services;
- providing data regarding systems and the provision of early childhood services in other states;
- seeking input from state and local providers of such services, families of young children in the Commonwealth and others invested in the preparation of our young children for school readiness; and
- producing a report by November 15, 2001, based on the above information, to develop policy and programmatic recommendations.

Federation Executive Director Richard Robison and former Federation staff member Evelyn Hausslein were sworn in as Commission members.

NewsLine

Editors:

Beth Dworetzky, Carolyn Romano

Layout & Design:

Nummi Nummerdor

Advertising:

Brooke Heraty

Contributors:

Betsy Anderson, Sandy Blanes, Kathy Cruz, Beth Dworetzky, Fernanda Gudino-Valentin, Brooke Heraty, Julia Landau, Gisel Pimentel, Barbara Popper, Richard Robison, Diana Rocha, Carolyn Romano, Polly Sherman, Phyllis Sneider, Joanne Spencer, Eileen Souza, Donna Welles, Nora Wells, Martha Ziegler

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NewsLine's mailing list is occasionally made available to organizations in which we believe our readers may have interest. If you wish your name to be withheld, please call or write the Federation's Boston office to inform us.

The Federation for Children with Special Needs, Inc.

Our Mission:

To provide information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners, and their communities. We are committed to listening to and learning from families, and encouraging full participation in community life by all people, especially those with disabilities.

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Richard J. Robison

Upcoming Federation Workshops

For more information about any workshops, please call the Federation at 800-331-0688. Call to find out about Basic Rights workshops in Portuguese. Ligue para informação sobre aulas iniciando em Português.

MARCH 2001

3/12, Lynnfield 7:30–9:30, *Basic Rights*

3/12, Berkshire Support Network,
6:00–8:00 PM, *IEP 2000*

3/12, Mattapan 7:00–9:00PM, *Basic Rights*

3/12, Framingham 7:00–9:00PM, *Transition*

3/13, Northbridge 7:00–9:00PM, *Basic Rights*

3/14, Methuen 7:00–9:00PM, *Basic Rights*

3/15, Chicopee 6:00–8:00 PM, *IEP 2000*

3/15, Newton 7:30–9:30PM, *Transition*

3/20, Sudbury 7:00–9:00PM, *Basic Rights*

3/21, Boston 6:30–8:30PM, *Basic Rights*

3/27, Braintree 7:00–9:00PM, *IEP 2000*

3/28, Concord 7:00–9:00PM, *IEP 2000*

3/29, Northampton 9:30–11:30AM,
Transition

3/31, Easthampton 9:30–11:30AM,
Transition

APRIL 2001

4/3, Saugus 7:00–9:00PM, *Basic Rights*

4/3, Ashburnham-Westminster 7:00–9:00PM,
IEP 2000

4/4, Cohasset 7:00–9:00PM, *Basic Rights*

4/5, Wakefield 7:00–9:00 PM, *Access to the
General Curriculum*

4/6, Agawam 7:00–9:00 PM, *Basic Rights*

4/9, Framingham 7:00–9:00PM, *Transition*

4/10, Worcester 10:00–12:00AM, *Basic Rights*

4/11, Topsfield 7:00–9:00PM, *Transition*

4/12, Rockport 6:00–8:00PM, *Basic Rights*

4/14, Bedford 9:30–Noon, *Transition &
IEP 2000*

4/24, Brockton 7:00–9:00PM, *IEP 2000*

MAY 2001

5/2, Cohasset 7:00–9:00 PM, *IEP 2000*

5/2, Somerville 6:30–8:30PM, *Basic Rights*

5/8, Winchendon 7:00–9:00PM, *Basic Rights*

5/25, Roxbury 2:00–4:00PM, *Basic Rights*

JUNE 2001

6/7, Needham 9:30–12:00, *Basic Rights*

6/11, Concord 7:30–9:30pm, *IEP Workshop*

6/15, Fitchburg 1:00–3:00pm,
Effective Communication

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Access to the General Curriculum: This parent-friendly workshop on diverse learning styles and access to the general curriculum for all students includes discussion and examples of modifications of content, delivery of instruction and performance criteria that allow students with disabilities to more fully participate and have success in the general curriculum.

Basic Rights: This workshop covers basic information about Chapter 766 and other state and federal special education laws to assist parents in the planning, decision-making, and monitoring of their child's IEP. (*Materials available in Spanish.*)

Effective Communication: This workshop offers conflict resolution and communication skill-building for parents as members of the IEP Team.

IEP 2000: These updated training workshops include a walk-through of the new IEP with emphasis on IDEA 97, access to the general curriculum, writing curriculum-based measurable annual goals, and the state's new special education regulations.

Transition: This workshop provides basic information on state and federal laws which require that IEPs address goals in such areas as competitive employment, independent living, and full integration into community life that will help prepare students for adult life.

Spring 2001 Parent Consultant Training Program

The Federation is pleased to announce its next Parent Consultant Training Programs:

WORCESTER

April 24, May 1, 8, 15, 2001

9am – 4pm at

Seven Hills Foundation
81 Hope Avenue, Worcester

and

May 22, 30, 2001 at

Clark University-Higgins
University Center
950 Main Street, Worcester

NORTHAMPTON

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, April 5, 2001

9:30am – 4:30 pm

at FCSN
243 King St. Conference Room, Northampton

The purpose of this training is to produce a knowledgeable and skilled group of parent consultants able to make a sustained commitment to represent parents of children with special needs and persons with disabilities in matters relating to special education. The program consists of six daylong sessions and a 50-hour internship. Topics covered include special education laws, negotiation, mediation, inclusion, transition, communication skills, and more. Class size is limited to 35.

- Completion of a Basic Rights workshop is a prerequisite.
- **Fee: \$275.00** for tuition and materials. A small number of scholarships are available.

For more information or an application, please contact **Phyllis Sneirson (617-236-7210)** or **Mary Loughlin (508-798-0531)** for the Worcester training, or **Julie Sinclair (413-585-8140)** for the Northampton training.



Early Intervention Training Center

Workshop Schedule: March 2001–September 2001

Early Intervention staff, families and other early childhood personnel are invited to attend. Trainings are from 9 am – 3:30 pm. Snacks and lunch are provided. For more information, call 1-800-331-0688 ext. 159 or register on-line at www.eitrainingcenter.org

MARCH 2001

Wednesday, Mar 7:

Play and Other Interventions, Part 1,
Holiday Inn, Taunton

Tuesday, Mar 20:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 2,
Home Suites Inn, Waltham

Friday, Mar 23:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 1,
UMass Healy Library, Boston

Wednesday, Mar 28:

Gathering Information with Families,
OCCS, Westborough

APRIL 2001

Wednesday, Apr 4:

Play and Other Interventions, Part 2,
Holiday Inn, Taunton

Tuesday, Apr 10:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 1,
Ramada Inn, Andover

MAY 2001

Wednesday, May 2:

IFSP Nuts and Bolts,
Federation for Children with Special Needs,
Boston

Thursday, May 3:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 2,
Department of Public Health, Northampton
(rescheduled from April 26)

Thursday, May 10:

Team Collaboration: Making it Work Together,
Ramada Inn, Andover

Tuesday, May 15:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 1,
Holiday Inn, Worcester

Thursday, May 24:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 2,
Holiday Inn, Taunton

JUNE 2001

Friday, June 1:

Joining the Journey of Adoptive Families,
Holiday Inn, Worcester

Thursday, June 7:

Partnerships with Families: Implementing Services and Supports,
Department of Public Health, Northampton

Monday, June 11:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 1,
Home Suites Inn, Waltham

Wednesday, June 20:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 2,
UMass Healy Library, Boston

Tuesday, June 26:

Service Coordination,
Holiday Inn, Worcester

JULY 2001

Tuesday, July 24:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 2,
Ramada Inn, Andover

AUGUST 2001

Wednesday, Aug 15:

Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 2,
Holiday Inn, Worcester

SEPTEMBER 2001

Thursday, Sept 13:

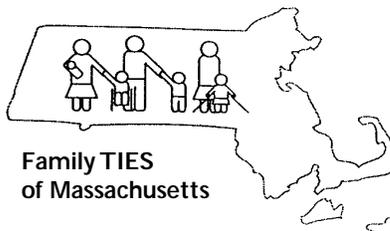
Building a Community: An Orientation to MA EI, Part 2,
Home Suites Inn, Waltham

The Early Intervention Training Center at the Federation is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

What's Next from Family TIES? Next Steps!

Family TIES (Together In Enhancing Support) is a statewide information, referral and support network for families of children with disabilities, special health care needs or chronic illnesses. They also provide parent-to-parent support and workshops.

Currently, Family TIES is presenting "Next Steps," a series of three skill-building workshops for families of children 4–12 years old. Participants will learn organizational and prob-



lem solving skills, advocacy and community building. For more information call Family TIES at 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or speak directly with Joanne Spencer at 508-947-1231, ext. 5180.

Be sure to stop by the Family TIES table at the Federation's annual conference in March!



"Maximizing Our Children's Future"

A Conference for Families of Children with Special Needs and the Professionals Who Serve Them

**Saturday
March 17th, 2001
8:00am–4:15pm**

See page 16 for details!

MassCARE: A Unique Program for Families Living with HIV

MassCARE (Massachusetts Community AIDS Resource Enhancement) is a statewide program, administered through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Division for Special Health Needs, that offers comprehensive, family-centered medical care and case management services to women, youth, children and their families living with HIV. MassCARE also offers Family Support Initiatives that include a Family Advisory Network, annual family support activities, and a family newsletter. Families do not have to receive their medical care through MassCARE in order to receive case management services or to participate in the Family Support Initiatives.

In partnership with DPH, the Federation has been involved in helping MassCARE promote family involvement in state and national HIV/AIDS policy development. Federation staff member Fernanda Gudino-Valentin leads MassCARE's Family Advisory Network, a group in which women, youth, children, and their families living with HIV can support each other and become involved in program planning at the local, state, and national level.

MassCARE clinics and special events include:

Brockton: MassCARE in Brockton is beginning a new women's support and art therapy group, which will meet Thursdays from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Art therapist Linda Lufkin will lead projects that help clients use their creativity to express their emotions and experiences. Other ongoing events include a monthly consumer luncheon and a teen/young adult HIV prevention and education networking group. All groups will be held at Brockton Area Multi Services, Inc (BAMSI), 500 Belmont Street, Brockton.

New Bedford: Clinic is held the third Thursday of each month from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Greater New Bedford Health Center, 874 Purchase Street, New Bedford. The Family Support Group, in effect since 1992, is a group for children and their family members affected by HIV and their primary caretakers. The group meets the second Thursday of the month. Additionally, a family support specialist is available for consultation. Call 508/992-6553 for an appointment.

Lawrence: Clinic continues to be held the first and third Wednesday of each month at the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, 34 Haverhill Street, Lawrence.



Lowell: Clinic is held the second Wednesday of the month at Lowell Community Health Center, 585 Merrimack Street, Lowell.

Springfield: Clinic is held in Springfield at 3300 Main Street on Mondays from 9-11:30 a.m. and Thursdays from 2-5 p.m. In Holyoke, clinic is held at Holyoke Pediatric Associates on the 4th Wednesday of every month. Mother's group meets on the 2nd Wednesday of every month. Teen group meets on the 4th Wednesday of every month.

For more information on any of these events call Fernanda Gudino-Valentin at the Central Regional DPH office, at 508-792-7880. For more information on the MassCARE program, contact Donna Shecrallah at DPH, 617-624-5978.

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From the Health Corner

at the Federation for Children with Special Needs

FAMILY VOICES

is a national grassroots organization of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health care needs. The Federation is one of the founding members of Family Voices and conducts Family Voices projects from the Federation office in Boston.

Every Child Deserves a Medical Home

"A medical home is not a building, house or hospital, but rather an approach to providing health care services in a high-quality and cost effective manner. Children and their families who have a medical home receive the care that they need from a pediatrician or physician (pediatric health care professional) whom they trust. The pediatric health care professionals and parents act as partners in a medical home to identify and access all the medical and non-medical services needed to help children and their families achieve their maximum potential."

—American Academy of Pediatrics

So, what exactly is a Medical Home? Is it a place? Is it a concept? While medical home services may be delivered in a place and was originally designed as a concept, it is now defined as "an approach to providing health care in an accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate and culturally effective way." If you think this sounds too good to be true and are wondering when medical home services

will be available to your child with special health care needs, your wait is almost over.

A team from Massachusetts including pediatricians, public health officials and parents recently attended a training in Hawaii to learn more about what a medical home should be, what other states are doing, and how to create a plan to make medical homes a reality in Massachusetts.

If you would like to learn more about the Medical Home Initiative or would like to participate in implementing this in your community, please consider taking an active role in one or more of the opportunities listed below:

- Attend the Federation's Annual Conference on March 17th where there will be a presentation about Medical Homes.
- Visit the Family Voices Massachusetts website at www.massfamilyvoices.org,



- Contact Polly Sherman, Family Voices State Coordinator, at (508) 947-1232 ext. 5144 or e-mail polly.sherman@state.ma.us

Parents to Interview Managed Health Care Insurers

Family Voices is a national grassroots coalition of families who work together to ensure that health care for children with special needs is comprehensive and family-centered. Last year, Family Voices initiated a national project where families interviewed staff at managed health care plans. This year, Family Voices at the Federation, in conjunction with New England Serve, joined together to train parents to meet with and interview staff from health plans in Massachusetts. Fifteen parents, working in teams of two, conduct these interviews and gather information about: how managed health

plans identify children with special needs, how specialty services (including mental health services) are accessed, what types of disagreements occur between families and plans and how they are resolved.

This information will help define policies of importance to children with special needs and will identify exemplary practices. These parent interviewers are also setting a positive tone for communication between plans and families. We'll keep you posted on their progress and findings.

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Children in Hospitals Survey Results Available

Children in Hospitals is a Massachusetts' parent organization that was created in 1972. Every two years, with support from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Federation for Children with Special Needs, Children in Hospitals conducts a survey of hospitals throughout the state. This information is compiled into a directory that lists hospital policies related to family-centered care, in table form; the tables are annotated with notes and explanations that are based on families' experiences. This directory is written for families who want to know statistical information about hospitals, how to support their children during a hospitalization, how to minimize separation from family

members when either children or parents are hospitalized, and what questions families may want to ask prior to a hospitalization.

The latest survey was conducted in 1999; the directory was completed and printed in April 2000, and an abbreviated version can be viewed on the web at www.state.ma.us/dph/bfch/cih/cih.htm.

Since the survey was completed, hospitals may have made changes to their programs and policies. Families should call the hospitals directly to be sure the information is still current and to have policies adjusted to meet individual families' needs.

Family Voices in SCHIP Implementation Project

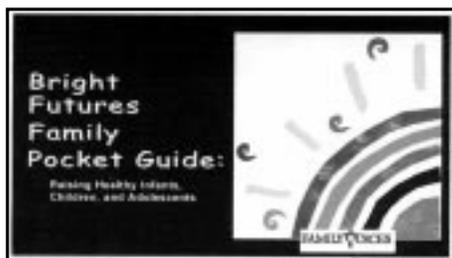
In 1997, the U.S. Congress enacted the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts played a key role in the passage of this legislation that allocated money to all 50 states to provide health insurance to uninsured children. Each state used the money differently. In Massachusetts, SCHIP funding was used to expand Medicaid eligibility and create the MassHealth program. All children, less than 19 years old from low to moderate-income families are eligible for free or low-cost insurance, or for assistance with their families' health insurance premiums. Call MassHealth at 800-841-2900 or visit www.state.ma.us/dma to find out if your family is eligible for one of the many types of MassHealth coverage.

SCHIP legislation requires that families participate in advisory roles in each state's program.

The Family Voices in SCHIP Implementation Project at the Federation has been helping families become familiar with the SCHIP program so they can participate in these leadership activities. In addition, Family Voices will publish comparisons about how effectively each state seeks consumer advice about their SCHIP. Contact Barbara Popper at the Federation for more information.

More information about SCHIP is available at www.childrensdefense.org, www.hicitizen.com, www.coveringkids.org, and www.familyvoices.org.

Bright Futures Pocket Guide



Family Voices at the Federation has a new publication, *Bright Futures Family Pocket Guide: Raising Healthy Infants, Children and Adolescents*. The Family Pocket Guide is designed for all families, whether or not their child has special health care needs. It is 100-pages, written in family-friendly language, and covers:

- *What happens at health visits from birth to age 21*
- *How to choose and work with a health care provider*
- *How your child grows*
- *What to expect when your child gets older*
- *Tip sheets*
- *Family web sites*
- *Resources for families*
- *And more...*

Overall, it encourages and prepares families to become effective partners for their children's good health. For a free copy of the Bright Futures Family Pocket Guide, contact the National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse at (888) 434-4624.

PAL News

Over the past two years, PAL has joined with many groups and families to advocate for increased funding for mental health services to children and adolescents in Massachusetts. Last year an additional \$10 million was allocated through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to address the crisis of kids being "stuck" at various points in the mental health care system. The majority of these funds were utilized to develop two new clinically intensive residential units for adolescents. The funds also provided for the development of clinical staff positions to assist children and adolescents as they move through the system.

The \$10 million showed a serious commitment on the part of the administration to address the crisis in the delivery of mental health services to children in our state. PAL thanks those legislators, advocates, and state officials who were involved in securing these funds. However, this is just a start! To fully address the crisis, there must also be funding on the other end of the spectrum—for community-based services!

Governor Cellucci released his budget recommendations for fiscal year 2002; there is \$4.375 million in new funding for mental health services. Again, thanks to the administration. *However*, the problems are greater than ever. PAL is going to approach the legislature and ask for a serious and bi-partisan commitment to the children and youth of Massachusetts by providing additional funding for children's mental health. It is our belief that a minimum of \$10 million should be allocated solely for developing and strengthening community-based mental health services. There are over 3000 children and adolescents waiting for various services at the community level. We cannot turn our backs on these youth!

You can add your voice to these requests by contacting your legislators over the next few months. PAL will make information and sample letters available on the Federation website (www.fcsn.org) and on the PAL website (www.ppal.net). You can email PAL at pal@fcsn.org with questions, comments and ideas. We look forward to hearing from you.



Federation for Children with Special Needs
1135 Tremont Street, Ste. 420
Boston, MA 02120
617-236-7210 Voice/TDD
MA Toll Free 800-331-0688
email: kidinfo@fcsn.org
web: www.fcsn.org

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Did you know?

Translated IEP forms are available in 17 languages (Albanian, Arabic, Cape Verde Kriolu, Chinese, English, French, Haitian Kreyol, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese) on the Mass. DOE website, http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/spr_conf00/forms/toc.html



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