Back to School With Your Child’s IEP

By Elizabeth Topaz, Senior Trainer, Parent Training and Information Center

If your child has a disability covered by special education law and is not making effective progress in school, he or she may need specially designed instruction and/or related services, such as occupational, speech and language, or physical therapy. If this is the case, he or she should have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The IEP Team, made up of school staff, the parents, and the student (if age 14 or older), works together to develop an education plan that is uniquely designed to address your child’s needs so he or she can learn. Once developed (or “proposed”), the IEP may only be implemented if agreed to in writing by the parent or guardian (or student, if over 18).

If you have questions about how to respond, our Call Center is available to assist you. You can fill in an online intake form (use the Call Center link on the front page of our website: www.fcsn.org or call us at 617-236-7210). We are available to respond Monday – Friday from 10:00am to 3:00pm.

The IEP contains a lot of information. Today we will discuss three areas:

**Accommodations** are changes that help a student with disabilities engage with and participate in the general education curriculum. Accommodations are put in place by classroom teachers and school staff. The list of your child’s accommodations (if any) will be found under the heading “Present Levels of Educational Performance” (PLEP). There are two PLEP pages in the IEP. You
From the Transitional Executive Director:

My name is Vivian (Viv) Swoboda and I am honored to be serving as the Transitional Executive Director for the Federation for Children with Special Needs. I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in the critically important work that is being done by the dedicated, hard-working Federation staff who inspire me each and every day by their commitment to the people, families, schools and communities they serve.

When I began my career in Massachusetts, I taught students with special needs in Cambridge Public Schools. Next, I transitioned to teaching in inclusive elementary school classrooms. After sixteen years of teaching, I served as a principal in Newton Public Schools, a system that has a strong history of neighborhood inclusion for students with disabilities.

After receiving my doctorate from Boston College, I began working as a principal in Boston Public Schools. I led schools in Dorchester and Roxbury before I retired and was able to spend more time with my family, including my twin grandsons who were toddlers at that time.

Since I arrived at the Federation in late June, I have enjoyed stimulating, individual conversations with almost all of the staff. In addition to describing their positions, they have shared ideas for what would help them to better do their jobs and help the Federation to be a more collaborative organization. They have shared suggestions for planning for the Federation’s future and have told me things they thought I should know. Their helpful feedback has helped smooth my transition and improve the effectiveness of my work.

A team has been assembled who will search for the next Executive Director. I will continue in my capacity as Transitional Executive Director during this process. I have been collaborating with Rich Robison who has assumed the role of Executive Director Emeritus. It is a privilege to help build upon the Federation’s strong foundation of more than forty years of exemplary work on behalf of people with disabilities.

I want to thank everyone who has worked to make the Federation the vital organization it is today. I feel fortunate to collaborate with such an expansive network of people united in the work of informing, educating and empowering families. May we inspire the world to join us in our mission!

All the best,

[Vivian Swoboda's signature]
Back to School With Your Child’s IEP

should review both to understand what accommodations will be provided and when they will be used.

Typical accommodations might include:

• additional time for tests or assignments
• graphic organizers
• seating near a role model
• specific technology.

Each of your child’s teachers should have access to the IEP and know what accommodations your child needs.

Special Education is specially designed instruction. This means that a special education teacher has changed:

• the content of the material,
• the way the material is taught, or
• the grading standards for your child.

If you want to know which of these changes will apply to your child, look at the last section of the “PLEP” pages of your child’s IEP. If the IEP proposes content changes, your child will be taught the same curriculum, but at a level appropriate for your child.

Special educators and therapists will work towards specific goals with your child. Each goal will be listed on its own page of the IEP, after the PLEP pages. Each goal is assigned a number, which will be useful to you when you read the Service Delivery Grid. Throughout the school year, you will receive as many progress reports as you do report cards, although the two may not be issued at the same time.

The Service Delivery Grid is located after the goals on your child’s IEP. It lists services the Team has determined are needed to reach your child’s goals. The goal number is listed in the left column of the Grid. Each goal should have at least one service on the Grid.

The Grid is divided into 3 sections. Section A, at the top, lists regularly scheduled consultations between a professional and teachers, service providers or parents. Consultations do not include any direct work with your child. Section B, in the middle, lists direct special education services that are provided to the student in a general education classroom. If the service that your child needs cannot be provided in a general education classroom, that service will be listed in Section C at the bottom.

Once you are familiar with your child’s IEP, you can better partner with your child’s school to ensure that he or she receives a great education. Use these tips as a starting point:

• Check in with your child’s teacher to ensure that she or he has a copy of the IEP;
• Confirm that arrangements are in place for the services and accommodations;
• Ask your child’s teachers what you can do to support what your child is learning at school, and how to ensure consistency between home and school;
• Attend back-to-school parent events and teacher conferences;
• Let your child’s teacher know that you appreciate his or her work with your child, and keep a positive relationship with your child’s teacher;
• If your child is older, ask him or her to reflect on their accommodations during the school year;
• Learn what works best for your child (and what doesn’t help!), and share this information with school during the year and at IEP team meetings;
• If your child is struggling, work with your child’s teacher first - you can also call a team meeting to discuss changes to the IEP.

Your role as an informed, supportive parent is an important component of a successful school year!

If you would like more information, consider attending our “free to attend” two-hour workshops on “Understanding Special Education Basic Rights” (to understand the special education process) and “An IEP for My Child” (to understand the IEP document):

https://fcsn.org/ptic/workshops/schedule.
De vuelta a la escuela con el IEP de su niño

Por Elizabeth Topaz, Entrenador Senior, Parent Training and Information Center

Si su niño tiene una discapacidad cubierta por la ley de educación especial y no está logrando un progreso efectivo en la escuela, tal vez necesite instrucción especialmente diseñada y/o servicios relacionados, como terapia ocupacional, del lenguaje del habla o fisioterapia. Si así fuera, debería tener un programa de educación individualizado (IEP, por sus siglas en inglés).

El equipo del IEP, compuesto por el personal escolar, los padres y el alumno (si tiene 14 años o más) prepara en colaboración un plan educativo diseñado específicamente para las necesidades de aprendizaje de su niño. Después de preparado (o “propuesto”), el IEP (o el IEP revisado) solo se puede implementar si el padre o tutor (o el alumno, si es mayor de 18 años) lo aceptan por escrito.

Si tiene una propuesta de IEP a la que no ha respondido, ¡ése es el momento!

Si tiene preguntas sobre cómo responder a un IEP, nuestro Centro de llamadas está disponible para ayudarle. Puede completar un formulario de admisión en línea (use el enlace al Centro de llamadas en la página principal de nuestro sitio web, www.fcsn.org, o llámenos al 617-236-7210). Estamos disponibles de lunes a viernes de 10:00 a.m. a 3:00 p.m.

El IEP tiene mucha información. En este artículo nos enfocaremos en tres partes del IEP:

Las adaptaciones son cambios que ayudan a que un estudiante con discapacidades participe en el plan de estudios general. Las adaptaciones son implementadas por los maestros del aula y el personal escolar. Están en las páginas del IEP del niño bajo el encabezado de niveles actuales de rendimiento educativo: “Present Levels of Educational Performance” (PLEP). Habrá dos páginas de PLEP en el IEP de su niño. Usted tiene que revisar las dos páginas para comprender qué adaptaciones se ofrecerán y cuándo se usarán. Éstos son algunos ejemplos de adaptaciones típicas:

- tiempo adicional para pruebas o asignaciones
- organizadores gráficos
- sentarse en el aula cerca de otro alumno que sea un buen modelo
- tecnología específica.

Cada uno de los maestros debe tener acceso al IEP y saber qué adaptaciones necesita su niño.

La educación especial es instrucción especialmente diseñada. Esto significa que un maestro de educación especial cambia

- el contenido del material,
- la manera en que se enseña o
- las normas de calificación para su niño.

Si desea saber cuál de estos cambios se aplicarán a su niño, consulte la última sección de las páginas de “PLEP” del IEP. Si el IEP propone cambios de contenido, a su niño se le enseñará el mismo plan de estudios, pero a un nivel apropiado para él o ella.

Los educadores y terapeutas de educación especial trabajarán con su niño para que logre metas específicas. Cada meta aparecerá en su propia página del IEP, después de las páginas de PLEP. A cada meta se le...
asigna un número, que le será útil cuando lea la cuadrícula de prestación de servicios. Durante el año escolar, recibirá tantos informes de progreso como boletines de calificaciones, aunque los dos tal vez no se emitan al mismo tiempo.

La cuadrícula de prestación de servicios está después de las metas del IEP. Enumera los servicios que el equipo ha determinado que son necesarios para alcanzar las metas de su niño. El número de la meta aparece en la columna izquierda de la cuadrícula. Cada meta debería tener al menos un servicio en la cuadrícula.

La cuadrícula se divide en 3 secciones. La Sección A, en la parte superior, enumera las consultas regularmente programadas entre un profesional y los maestros, proveedores de servicios o padres. Las consultas no incluyen el trabajo directo con su niño. La Sección B, en el medio, enumera los servicios directos de educación especial que se ofrecen al alumno en un aula de educación general. Si el servicio que su niño necesita no se puede ofrecer en un aula de educación general, ese servicio se debe enumerar en la Sección C en la parte inferior.

Una vez que se familiarice con el IEP de su niño, podrá colaborar mejor con la escuela para asegurar que su niño reciba una gran educación. Use estos consejos como punto de partida:

- Compruebe que el maestro de su niño tenga una copia del IEP;
- Confirme que se han hecho arreglos para los servicios y las adaptaciones;
- Pregunte a los maestros qué puede hacer para apoyar el aprendizaje de su niño y asegurar que haya coherencia entre el hogar y la escuela;
- Vaya a eventos para padres de preparación para el regreso a la escuela y a reuniones con maestros;
- Mantenga una relación positiva con el maestro y dígale le agradece el trabajo que hace con su niño;
- Si su niño es mayor, pídale que reflexione sobre sus adaptaciones durante el año escolar;
- Aprenda lo que funciona mejor para su niño (y lo que no es útil) y comparta esta información con la escuela durante el año y en las reuniones del equipo del IEP;
- Si su niño tiene dificultades, primero trabaje con el maestro; también puede pedir una reunión del equipo para hablar de cambios al IEP.

¡Su papel como padres informados y comprensivos es un componente importante de un año escolar exitoso!

Para mayor información, consideren asistir a nuestros talleres gratuitos de 2 horas sobre “Derechos Básicos de Educación Especial” (para comprender el proceso de la educación especial) y “Un IEP para mi niño” (para comprender el IEP):

https://fcsn.org/ptic/workshops/schedule

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Fall 2018 Seminars for Families & Professionals


September 29, Marlborough, MA for families - Housing: Creative Solutions, Options & Challenges

October 27, Marlborough, MA for families and trustees - How to Administer a Special Needs Trust

Seminars are led by Frederick M. Misilo, Esq. and the Fletcher Tilton Special Needs Team.

Visit FletcherTilton.com/seminars-events for details, more seminars, and to register.
Se o seu filho tem uma deficiência que é coberta pela lei de educação especial e não está progredindo bem na escola, ele pode precisar de instrução personalizada e/ou serviços relacionados (tal como terapia ocupacional, de fala e linguagem, ou física). Se esse for o caso, ele deve ter um Programa Educacional Individualizado (IEP, pela sigla em inglês).

A Equipe do IEP, composta por funcionários da escola, os pais e o aluno (se tiver mais de 14 anos), trabalha em conjunto para desenvolver um plano educacional personalizado que atenda às necessidades específicas do seu filho e facilite a sua aprendizagem. Uma vez desenvolvido (ou “proposto”), o IEP (ou a revisão do IEP) somente pode ser implementado após a aprovação por escrito do pai/mãe ou responsável (e do aluno, se tiver mais de 18 anos). Se você recebeu uma proposta de IEP e ainda não respondeu, este é o momento de fazê-lo! Se tiver dúvidas sobre como responder, o nosso call center (central de atendimento) pode ajudá-lo. Você pode preencher um formulário de inscrição online (use o link do call center na página principal do nosso website: www.fcsn.org, ou ligue para 617-236-7210). Nosso horário de atendimento é de segunda a sexta-feira, das 10:00 da manhã às 3:00 da tarde.

O IEP tem muita informação. Este artigo centra-se em três áreas:

Acomodações são mudanças que ajudam o aluno portador de deficiência a se engajar e participar no currículo de educação geral. As acomodações são implementadas pelos professores na sala de aula e pelos funcionários da escola. Encontram-se na seção “Níveis atuais de desempenho educacional” (PLEP, pela sigla em inglês) do IEP. Há duas páginas com o PLEP no IEP do seu filho. Você deve revisar as duas páginas para entender as acomodações fornecidas e quando serão aplicadas.
usadas. Algumas acomodações típicas podem ser: • additional time for tests or assignments
  • tempo adicional para fazer testes ou tarefas
  • organizadores gráficos
  • sentar-se perto de outro aluno com comportamento positivo
  • tecnologias específicas.

Todos os professores do seu filho devem ter acesso ao IEP e saber quais são as acomodações necessárias.

A Educação Especial é um tipo de instrução especialmente direcionada. Isso implica que o professor de educação especial mudou
  • o conteúdo do material,
  • a forma como o material é ensinado ou
  • a escala de notas do seu filho.

Se você quer saber quais dessas mudanças se aplicam a seu filho, confira a última seção das páginas do “PLEP” do IEP. Se o IEP propõe mudanças no conteúdo, o seu filho aprenderá o mesmo currículo, mas num nível mais apropriado para ele.

Os educadores especiais e os terapeutas trabalharão junto a seu filho para alcançar objetivos específicos. Cada objetivo terá uma página definida no IEP, após as páginas do PLEP. Cada objetivo terá um número designado, o que ajudará a interpretar o cronograma de serviços. Ao longo do ano você receberá tantos relatórios de acompanhamento como boletins escolares, embora os dois possam ser emitidos em momentos diferentes.

O cronograma de serviços encontra-se após os objetivos no IEP do seu filho. Ele contém uma lista dos serviços determinados pela equipe para que o seu filho possa alcançar os objetivos. O número do objetivo encontra-se na coluna da esquerda no cronograma. Cada objetivo deve ter pelo menos um serviço no cronograma.

O cronograma está dividido em 3 seções. Seção A, no topo, lista consultas agendadas periodicamente entre profissionais e professores, prestadores de serviços ou pais. As consultas não incluem nenhum contato direto com o seu filho. Seção B, no meio, lista serviços de educação especial fornecidos ao aluno em uma sala de aula de educação geral. Se o seu filho precisa de um serviço que não pode ser fornecido na sala de aula de educação geral, o serviço estará listado na Seção C, no final.

Uma vez familiarizado com o IEP, você poderá formar uma parceria melhor com a escola para garantir que o seu filho possa receber uma excelente educação. Use estas dicas como ponto de partida:
  • Converse com o professor do seu filho para verificar que ele tenha uma cópia do IEP;
  • Confirme que há arranjos necessários para os serviços e acomodações;
  • Converse com o professor do seu filho para saber como você pode ajudar o seu filho em casa com o que está sendo aprendido na escola e assim manter um ritmo comum entre a escola e a casa;

Se quiser obter mais informação, considere participar de dois workshops grátis de 2 horas chamados “Entendendo os Direitos Básicos da Educação Especial” (para entender o processo de educação especial), e “Um IEP Para Meu Filho” (para entender os documentos do IEP):

https://fcsn.org/ptic/workshops/schedule
Family TIES of Massachusetts: Have You Thought about Health Care Transition for your Child with Special Needs?
By Linda Surprenant, Western Regional Coordinator, Family TIES of Massachusetts

Health care transition is a reality that all young adults face. Your child can’t see a pediatrician forever!
The health care transition process supports young adults as they move from pediatric care into the adult health care system. The goal is keeping continuity of developmentally appropriate, high-quality healthcare - with specialized accommodations when needed. It is an important process, especially for youth with chronic disorders, chronic illness, or special health care needs.

Health care transition should be a collaborative process. Current guidelines recommend that conversations among the family, the young adult, and his or her treatment team begin when the youth is 14 years old. The shift to the adult healthcare system would ideally occur between 18 to 21 years of age, and it is best if the young adult participates to the best of their ability.

As children get older, they need to understand and learn how to manage their medical need, and develop skills that will lead toward independence. An organized approach will help them prepare for the transition to the adult model of healthcare.

Healthcare Transition Tips:
- Start the process early.
- Understand that healthcare transition is a process that requires ongoing planning.
- Talk to your child’s healthcare provider to determine if the practice has a transition policy. If there is a policy, ask for information about the process for your child, especially if your child has special healthcare needs.
- Determine what your child knows about their basic healthcare needs.
- Consider using the Assessment Tools for young adults on the Got Transition website.
- Create opportunities for your child to actively participate in their doctor visits.
- Discuss and create a transition plan for your child or young adult.
- Determine if there is a liaison who will facilitate the communication between the pediatric and adult health care teams.
- If possible, meet with the adult healthcare provider prior to health care transition.

Information and Resources:
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Health Transition for Youth and Young Adults with Special Health Needs

Federation for Children with Special Needs:
- The LINK Center

National:
- Got Transition Website
- What Is Health Care Transition?
- Are you ready to transition to adult health care? Quiz
- Sample Self-Care Assessment for Young Adults
- Implementing Transitions for Youth with Complex Chronic Conditions Using the Medical Home Model
- Preparing Students to Manage Health: a Partnership between Home and School (PDF)
- Pediatric verses Adult Providers - Some differences you may encounter when switching from doctors that see children to doctors that see adults
- National Parent Center on Transition and Employment Health & Transition

Family TIES of Massachusetts: There’s No Place Like home!
By Linda Surprenant, Western Regional Coordinator, Family TIES of Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission’s (MRC) Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) recently announced some changes which increase the benefits available to eligible households. HMLP now offers income-eligible households loans up to $50,000. Additionally, the program has simplified the loan products offered and now offers 0% interest, deferred payment loans to all income eligible households. Repayment is required only when the home is sold or transferred.

Loans can help finance projects such as:
- Ramps
- Stair lifts and wheelchair lifts
- Kitchen and bathroom adaptations
- Accessory dwelling units
- Home security features including hard-wired alarm systems, safety windows, and fences

For more information, visit: cedac.org/hmlp or call Susan Gillam at 1-866-500-5599.
Introducing Our New “Microsite”:
“Special Education Placement Options” (SEPO)

By Erin Anguish, Communications Coordinator

The Federation is happy to announce the launch of [fcsn.org/sepo](http://fcsn.org/sepo)! SEPO stands for “Special Education Placement Options”, which can range from a substantially separate classroom to a residential care facility. SEPO offers an overview of these settings, with a specific focus on private and residential placement.

**SEPO was designed for:**

- Families of children receiving special education services but do not feel that their child’s needs are being met
- Parents who have questions about alternative options to their child’s current placement
- Parents of children with complex needs who may require an alternative school program or private day school
- Parents considering or coping with placing their child (or adult child) in a residential setting who would like emotional support for the unique stressors of the experience
- Professionals working with children with complex challenges who would like a better understanding of the perspectives and needs of families considering or experiencing private placement.

Dr. Linda Helmig Bram, whose child has special needs, saw a gap in support for families like her own. Her aim was to create a “one stop shop” of information for parents considering placement options while offering a means for them to share their experiences. The site includes a section of “parent stories”, as well as a form you can use to submit your own thoughts. Funded for SEPO was provided by the John L. and Geraldine R. Weil Foundation and the Boston Foundation.

RTSC: Are You Looking to Make a Difference?

By Mary-Beth Landy, Training and Support Specialist, Recruitment, Training, and Support Center (RTSC)

Are you a parent or professional looking for a way to share your knowledge and experience navigating the special education process? Would you like to make a difference in the life of a vulnerable student? We have the perfect answer: become an SESP volunteer with RTSC!

What is an SESP?

Federal law requires that a student’s parent or guardian be included in the special education decision-making process. However, children in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) (or youth who are unaccompanied / homeless), may not have anyone to fill that role. In Massachusetts, such children depend on Special Education Surrogate Parents (SESPs) to protect their legal right to a free and appropriate public education.

What does it take to become an SESP?

The average SESP spends just 30-40 hours a year volunteering, but these hours can make a critical difference in the life of a child. Special Education Surrogate Parents have the same legal rights as a parent or legal guardian, in terms of special education decision-making. They attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) team meetings, approve or reject IEPs, and, if necessary, file complaints or appeals on behalf of the students they support. Volunteers must be over 18, have no conflict of interest, submit a CORI application, and attend an initial three-hour orientation. All volunteers agree to work for the best interest of the student.

How great is the need for additional volunteers?

Approximately 995 students across the state are eligible for the program, and 663 SESPs are actively appointed. With the growing number of eligible children in Massachusetts, the need for knowledgeable, committed SESP volunteers becomes ever more urgent. Our volunteers include parents, educators, retirees, and others looking to make a difference for these vulnerable students.

The Recruitment, Training, and Support Center for Special Education Surrogate Parents offers training and support to our volunteers through monthly webinars, a bi-monthly Network Series, special events, phone and email support, as well as free admission to our annual Making a Difference Conference.

The 2018 conference will be held on November 27, 2018 at the Best Western Hotel and Conference Center in Marlboro, MA.

For more information about becoming a SESP, please contact Jean Willoughby at jwilloughby@fcsn.org, or 617-399-8369, or Elaine Arsenault in Western Mass. at earsenault@fcsn.org, or 413-522-7178.

Know that you can be the person who makes a difference in the life of a student!
The Pathways project is a joint partnership between the Federation for Children with Special Needs, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), that helps provide a voice for parents - including foster / adoptive / kinship parents – who are involved with DCF. One of the goals of Pathways is to offer information and support to families who have children on Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

As the Program Coordinator for Pathways, I’m frequently asked: “who is the special education decision-maker for a child placed in DCF care”?

Although a DCF social worker may refer a child for special education services, he or she cannot act as the child’s special education decision-maker under federal special education law (34 CFR 300.9(d)(2). The DCF worker does not have the authority to give consent for special education evaluations, to sign an Individualized Education Program IEP, or to file a special education appeal.

Under state and federal special education law, when a child is in the care of DCF, the parents retain the right and responsibility to make special education decisions. If the child is placed in the custody of DCF through an order from the Juvenile Court or Probate and Family Court, is living in a foster home, and it is determined that the child’s parent should not continue as the educational decision-maker, the foster parent has the authority to make decisions about the child’s special education.

When DCF receives custody of a child through a “Child Requiring Assistance” [CRA] case [formerly CHINS] (a situation where the parent voluntarily places their child in DCF custody), the parent retains the right to make decisions related to special education. Information on CRA cases can be found at: https://www.mass.gov/child-requiring-assistance-cases

When the child is in DCF custody and placed in congregate care (i.e. a group home or residential placement) and the parent cannot or will not continue as an educational decision-maker, DCF will appoint a Special Education Surrogate Parent (SESP) to make special education decisions for the child.

Our Recruitment Training and Support Center for Special Education Surrogate Parents (RTSC) helps fill the need for SESP volunteers, and offers a wealth of resources to help SESPs, birth parents, kinship / foster caregivers, and professionals learn more about the special education system as well as the social-emotional issues such children may be facing.

Make a Difference in a Student’s Life
Become a Special Education Surrogate Parent (SESP)

SESPs are special education decision makers for children in Massachusetts who are in the custody of a state agency.

- Are you a parent, school professional, advocate, retiree, or other community member looking for an invaluable and impactful experience?
- Do you have experience with the IEP process?
- Would you like to play a role in the academic success for one of our state’s most vulnerable students?

Contact us today to get started!

The Recruitment, Training and Support Center (RTSC) for Special Education Surrogate Parents (SESPs)
A project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs

www.fesn.org/rtsc  (617) 399-8342  rtsc@fesn.org
When Will the Department of Children and Families Seek a Special Education Surrogate Parent for a Child?

Source: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/2013SurrogateParent.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/2013SurrogateParent.html)

In general, DCF’s decision to seek the appointment of an SESP for a child will be made as follows:

**Voluntary Placement Agreements and DCF Custody - “Child Requiring Assistance (CRA)” (formerly “CHINS” custody): Parent**

When a child is in the care of DCF, as opposed to custody, the parent retains the right and responsibility to make decisions related to special education. In such cases the child has generally entered placement primarily to address his/her issues rather than as a result of concerns regarding the parent’s caretaking. DCF has care of a child in situations where the parent has either signed a voluntary placement agreement with the Department or has entered into a care and responsibility agreement with DCF in the Probate and Family Court. While DCF may receive custody of a child through a “Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) (formerly “CHINS”) proceeding, that proceeding is similarly based upon the child’s issues, and in such cases the parent will consequently retain the right and responsibility to make decisions related to special education.

**Placement with a Foster Family / “Intensive Foster Care Family” (if parent does not maintain role, foster parent agrees, and foster parent has no conflict of interest): Foster Parent**

When a child is in the legal custody of DCF through an order of either the Juvenile Court or Probate and Family Court (with the exception of “Child Requiring Assistance” matters), is living in a foster home, and DCF determines that the child’s parent should not continue in the role of educational decision-maker, the DCF social worker will request the child’s foster parent to act in this role unless a conflict of interest is identified. When the child’s foster parent agrees to assume this responsibility, federal law provides for the child’s foster parent to have authority to make decisions related to special education, and no appointment by the SESP Program is necessary, nor is there a need to request an SESP.

**Placement in Congregate Care (if parent does not maintain role): SESP**

When a child is in the legal custody of DCF and living in a congregate care setting (for example, a group home or residential placement) and DCF has determined that the child’s parent will not continue in the role of special educational decision-maker, DCF will seek the appointment of an SESP to make special education decisions on behalf of the child.

Unusual circumstances may occur that would warrant departure from the general principles outlined above. In such cases, a referral may be made to the SESP Program with an explanation of the basis for the requested appointment. The SESP Program will consider these requests on an individual basis after consultation with the child’s DCF social worker or other appropriate DCF representative.
FCSN Outreach: Online Resources in Spanish and Haitian Creole!

By Erin Anguish, Communications Coordinator

Our outreach staff members have been hard at work in the community; facilitating support groups, leading workshops, and fielding phone calls from families of children with all types of disabilities. As if that weren’t enough, they have also created and compiled a host of translated materials for new, language-specific sections of fcsn.org.

The sites offer PDF guides, webinars, and Powerpoint slideshows. These materials are meant to give parents a solid foundation on which to build an understanding of the special education system and special education law, from early intervention through the transition to life after high school. There is also information on support groups, resources, and a form where users can contact outreach staff members directly, in their own language.

Recognizing the cultural differences at play for families of children with special needs, our goal is to empower all parents with knowledge so that they can successfully advocate for their children. We currently have two language-specific sites available, in Spanish and Haitian Creole. Over the coming months, we will launch three additional sites: Portuguese, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

We hope you pass this information along to families you may work with, and stay tuned as we add more information and resources! In the meantime, Users can find us on Facebook in Portuguese (Grupo de Apoio da Federação para Crianças com Necessidades Especiais), Spanish (Federación para Niños con Necesidades Especiales) and Vietnamese (Vòng Tay Cha Mẹ Việt).

Resources for Spanish speakers:
https://fcsn.org/spanish

Resources for Haitian Creole speakers:
https://fcsn.org/haitian-creole

Pictures from the Vietnamese Support Group:
Vòng Tay Cha Mẹ Việt’s Summer Picnic

Images courtesy of Vy Phan Photography

Attendees at the park

Vòng Tay Cha Mẹ Việt’s banner

Beanbag races!

What’s a picnic without selfies?

Gathering for a group photo

A nice day to fly a kite
As each new school year approaches, I anticipate hearing from parents of students age 14-22 asking where they should be in the transition process and what they need to do during the school year to keep their students on track. Luckily, there are guidelines and milestones to help families navigate a successful transition. I think that timelines are a great way to not only keep on track but also to see what is coming up, so that parents can start preparing themselves and their student for life after high school. Each young adult is different and may meet these milestones late, or early, or not at all, but having guidance is always helpful.

This is the first of a two-part series covering transition timelines. For this issue of Newsline we are going to cover ages 14-17. When a student turns 18 they become an adult in the eyes of the law so we will be addressing 18-22 separately.

Here are some highlights by age:

**Age 14:**
- The student attends and participates in IEP meetings (to the best of their ability) until they graduate or turn 22.
- The student, family, and school personnel use the Transition Planning Form (TPF) to develop post-secondary vision based on student needs, preferences, and interests. (The TPF should be updated annually at the IEP meeting.)
- Age-appropriate transition assessments are conducted
- A preliminary determination is made as to whether the student is on a path to graduate with a high school diploma or if they will stay in school until age 22 and receive a certificate of attendance.
- Ensure that the student has opportunities to learn self-determination and self-advocacy skills (this should happen every year until graduation or age 22).
- Apply for Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS).

**Age 15 and 16**
- Update the transition assessment based on preferences and needs.
- Update the TPF based on assessment and input from the IEP team.
- Research adult service agencies to determine which will best serve the student after high school.
- Apply for MRC pre-ETS services (if not done at 14).
- Identify possible work opportunities in school or in the community

**Age 17**
- The school will give notice to the student and parent regarding the Transfer of Parental Rights the year before the student turns 18.
- Explore the need for guardianship, supported decision-making, and other forms of legal protections.
- Submit a Chapter 688 referral, if the student is likely to require services from an adult service agency (the referral must be made at least two years before the student is expected to graduate or turn 22).
- If DDS is the appropriate service agency, complete and submit the application for adult services. 
- Community work experiences should be established if student is not already working.
- Start to consider and research housing options.
- Prepare for SSI application.

This is just an overview of some of the important milestones that occur during the transition years. Each student will travel a unique path through school but knowing what is ahead can make the journey a bit easier. Please explore more detailed transition timelines by visiting the following links:


**NEADS**
World Class Service Dogs change lives
Learn how Service Dogs can help children with physical disabilities, autism and other developmental disabilities.

NEADS.org/fcsn
New England Regional Genetics Network (NERGN)
By Karen Volle, Project Coordinator, New England Regional Genetics Network (NERGN)

**Massachusetts Family Voices** has partnered with the New England Region Genetics Network (NERGN) to help provide information to families of children with genetic conditions. The Federation is excited to welcome Karen Volle, Program Coordinator for NERGN, as a guest contributor to this Fall’s edition of NEWSLINE. Here, Karen shares an overview of her organization and its valuable resources.

- *Pat Nemia, Project Director, Massachusetts Family Voices*

The New England Regional Genetics Network (NERGN) is housed with the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire. We are one of seven Regional Genetics Networks across the country, funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Massachusetts networks are made up of family/advocate organizations like Family Voices, genetic service and primary care providers, public health, telehealth specialists, and others interested in improving access to genetic services for individuals with genetic conditions.

In our region, we build partnerships, train & educate, as well as facilitate activities that will:

- Link medically underserved populations to genetic services
- Increase the use of telegenetics to enhance access to genetic services
- Incorporate genetics into primary care practices
- Provide technical assistance and resources to providers, public health, and families.

To check out those resources, please visit our website, ([www.negenetics.org](http://www.negenetics.org)) specifically the Genetic Education Support System (GESS), our service_resource_map, and search_library. Also, visit our recently updated Genetics_Education_Materials_for_School_Success (GEMSS) website which now features a blue health care information button for health care providers for 37 genetic conditions.

Every Spring we host an Annual Meeting in Portsmouth and perhaps you'll consider coming! Read about the Family Round Table and the Multi-Cultural Family Perspective, which were both very dynamic. If you'd like to learn more about upcoming events and receive our monthly newsletter, contact me at: karen.volle@unh.edu.

"For children and adolescents with autism spectrum and related disorders, there’s no place like Pathways Academy."

Jennifer Zack, MS, OTR/L

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NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
Upcoming Federation Conferences!

**LINK Center: Planning a Life**
**October 25 & 26, 2018**
**Location: Brockton Area Arc, Brockton**

Offered three times each year at locations across the state, *Planning A Life* (PAL) is a two-day conference for families, educators, and professionals who would like to learn more about the transition to life after high school for students with special needs. [fcsn.org/linkcenter](http://fcsn.org/linkcenter)

**Massachusetts Family Voices: Joining Voices**
**November 13, 2018**
**Location: Edwards House Meeting and Retreat Center, Framingham**

Save the date for *Joining Voices*, where families of children with special health needs join with industry professionals to learn strategies for working collaboratively to provide the best possible continuity of care. Sessions address topics such as research updates, tips to access insurance, and medical transition. [fcsn.org/mfv](http://fcsn.org/mfv)

**RTSC: Making a Difference**
**November 27, 2018**
**Location: Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel & Trade Center, Marlboro**

This event for RTSC’s Special Education Surrogate Parents (SESPs), Foster/Adoptive and Kinship Caregivers, and their Professional Partners presents a range of topics that help their volunteers support students involved with the Department of Children and Family Services. Workshops ranged from Restorative Justice to ESSA Updates to trauma-informed evaluations. Plus, if you are an SESP or a DCF-involved foster / adoptive / kinship caregiver, this event is free to attend! [fcsn.org/rtsc](http://fcsn.org/rtsc)

**Visions of Community**
**March 9, 2019**
**Location: Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center**

Planning is underway for VOC 2019, our annual conference for families of children with special needs and the professionals who support them! It offers a menu of over Choose from a menu of more than 35 90-minute workshops, including programming for Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, and Haitian-Creole speakers. Registration opens in January 2019!
Introducing the Latino Parent Leadership Program (PLPL)

If you want to improve your understanding of special education rights so you can better address your child’s needs, this training is for you.

The Latino Parent Leadership Program is an intensive training program consisting of 30 hours of classroom instruction and exercises. Optional internships through the Federation are available to most who complete the classroom component. Presenters include leading attorneys and special education experts, Federation staff, and representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Bureau of Special Education Appeals.

Please contact our Latino Outreach Coordinator, Olga Lopez, with questions: olopez@fcsn.org