Over 200 special education surrogate parents and others attended the 8th annual Making a Difference Conference hosted by the Federation’s Recruitment, Training, and Support Center (RTSC). See page 11 for photos and more information.

What a Parent Can Do If Your Child is Bullied at School

By Leslie Leslie, Project Director MassPAC / APPLE

You may get a call from the school. You may notice your child is withdrawn, upset or feeling sick. Your child might tell terrible stories about what is happening at school.

Now you are aware that your child may be being bullied at school. Not all mean or hurtful behavior is actually bullying. Bullying relies on an imbalance of power to hurt someone in a repetitive and deliberate way. If you think your child is the victim of bullying at school, what steps should you take?

Your whole family needs to support your child and be open about what is going on.

Continued on page 4

Get Ready for VOC:

The Federation’s conference for families and professionals is Feb. 29. See page 6.
Collaboration strengthens the Federations’ services to families

Dear Federation family,

Parents often reach out to the Federation through our call center. Some examples:

“I think my child’s school is not providing all the services it should.” Or, “My son is transitioning from high school, and we’re unsure of the next steps.” Alternatively, “My child has a combination of health and learning issues. I’m overwhelmed by decisions I need to make.”

The common question is: “Can the Federation help?” The answer is: We can!

It starts with our staff’s knowledge and experience. However, if we are not the expert or right choice for services needed, we certainly connect the parent to someone who is.

In its nearly 45 years, the Federation has collaborated with many agencies – mostly in Massachusetts but also across the country. Those connections magnify the help we can provide to families … something that our funders and donors can be proud of.

For example, a parent of a young woman with Down syndrome called to say her daughter had left high school with no plans for further services. The family had fallen between the cracks. Our staffer connected them with the commonwealth’s Department of Developmental Services. A plan was quickly in place.

Touchingly, that parent left a voice message at 9 p.m. that day, saying, “We finally have the right connections and we could not have done it without the Federation.”

I am impressed that the Federation’s reputation goes beyond Massachusetts. We are a national leader and a model agency. One staff member told me about a grandmother in Virginia who contacted us concerning her speech-delayed grandson. The grandmother could not locate a speech therapist in her rural area. She had heard about the Federation through webinars. “Can you help?” Our program leader connected the woman with an organization in Virginia. The boy soon received a speech device, and, in an email to us, the grandmother expressed her gratitude for that connection.

I pause every time I say this, because it is such a cliché. It does take a village of knowledgeable professionals, collaborative organizations, parents, schools and others to ensure special-needs children receive the services they need.

I am grateful for my staff’s knowledge and the connections they have developed. I am also so appreciative of the thanks we receive from so many families and professionals.

Sincerely,

Pam Nourse
Health Update: Insurance Coverage and Behavioral Health Services

By Pat Nemia, Project Director
Massachusetts Family Voices

Private insurance coverage of behavioral health services for children and adolescents has changed in Massachusetts.

As of July 1, 2019, Massachusetts fully-funded or fully-insured private health insurance plans are required to pay for certain behavioral health services for children and adolescents. Self-insured or self-funded health plans are not required to cover these services.

What is fully-funded vs. self-funded plan?
Fully-funded plans are purchased by your employer from an insurance company. You and/or your employer pay premiums, and the insurance company pays claims for covered services. A plan purchased through the Health Connector or directly from a Massachusetts’s health insurance company is also a fully-funded plan.

In a self-funded plan, employers collect premiums and employers pay employee claims. Self-funded health plans often look the same as fully-funded plans because employers usually hire an insurance company to manage or administer the self-funded health plan.

What behavioral health services are now covered by fully-funded private insurance plans?
As of July 1, 2019, the following behavioral services were covered:
• In-home behavioral services.
• Behavior management monitoring.
• Behavior management therapy.
• In-home therapy or family stabilization treatment.
• Therapeutic clinical intervention.
• Ongoing therapeutic training and support.
• Mobile crisis intervention.
• Intensive care coordination.
• Community-based acute treatment (CBAT).
• Intensive community-based acute treatment (ICBAT)

As of July 1, 2020, the following behavioral health services will be covered:
• Therapeutic mentoring services.
• Family support and training / family partner support.

What if I have a self-funded plan?
Self-funded plans do not have to comply with the regulation. Check with your plan to determine if it has decided to include behavioral services as a benefit.

What if I have MassHealth?
MassHealth already covers behavioral health services through the Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI): https://www.mass.gov/childrens-behavioral-health-initiative-cbhi. There is no change to MassHealth coverage of these services.

If this change applies to your child, follow these steps to insure continuity of care.

1. Find out what type of insurance plan you have. If you are not certain which type of plan, ask your employer’s human resources department or contact your plan directly to ask if these services are covered. Do not assume that an insurance company name or logo on your card and plan materials means that your health plan provides the Behavioral Health services for Children and Adolescents (BHCA).

2. Talk with your health plan to see if they will continue to cover your child’s current provider(s) and services. If not, request a list of providers that will be in your network or work with your health plan to find providers.

3. Talk with your child’s current behavioral health provider(s). Share your insurance information and ask if there will be any impact to your child’s services.

For more information about private insurance coverage for behavioral health services visit: https://childrensmentalhealthcampaign.org/resources or contact the Federation’s Massachusetts Family Voices at 800-331-0688.

Material from The Children’s Mental Health Campaign is included in this article.

Family TIES’ website has a new look
The Federation has transformed its Family TIES’ website, making it both more accessible and navigable.

The Resource Directory, the “pink book” as it’s called, is now a downloadable document.

Visitors can search easily for an Early Intervention program in their area and find regional coordinators with ease.

The URL remains the same: www.massfamilyties.org.
What a Parent Can Do If Your Child is Bullied at School

Continued from page one

The child needs to know that you are listening. Ask your child what you can do to help. Don’t place blame. Encourage your child to keep communicating with you. Try to find out details about what is happening, dates, times, places, actions, and document everything.

It is difficult to hear that your child feels threatened at school, you want to stop what is going on immediately. But your child needs to learn how to deal with the bullying, how to react (or not to react) and how to get help or talk with someone about it. You may want to rescue your child, but they need to build social and emotional skills to deal with it themselves.

It is the school’s responsibility to stop bullying. Obtain a copy of the school’s anti-bullying policy to determine if the bully violated a school policy. Learn your rights. Talk with your school principal and ask what you can do together to stop the bullying. Stick to the facts without becoming overly emotional. Monitor what actions the school takes. If the bullying does not stop, file a formal complaint.

Find a champion for your child at school, it could be a classroom teacher or a guidance counselor. Let your child know that you are working with the school to prevent the bullying. Ask your child to seek out this school staff member when they need assistance. Taking steps on their own will give a child some control over the situation and help them feel less powerless.

There are things a child can do to handle the situation at school. Practice scenarios at home where your child learns how to ignore a bully. Talk about safe ways to act in situations that might be dangerous. For older students, you may need to learn how to stop cyberbullying with discretion. Help your child identify one friend in their class or how to build a support network of trusted peers. Your child cannot stop people from saying bad things, but they can take control over how they respond.

Help your child to find something they can do well. It can be an activity outside of school, such as scouting or swimming. Choosing an activity that they are good at will help build self-esteem. A positive experience will help your child feel good about themselves, building resiliency and confidence to counter how the bullies make your child feel.

Families should ask for support. Be sure to talk with your spouse, supportive family or friends. It is important to work through your feelings so you are available to support your child. If nothing else, it may help you feel like you aren’t alone and that there isn’t anything wrong with your child.

Bullying is not something your child is going to get over immediately. It can be a long process. Helping your child build self-esteem, find people to help them, and to take some control over their situation will allow your child to succeed.

Resources:
https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/parents/helping-your-child.asp
https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/bullying
https://cyberbullying.org/resources/teens

Note:
Part 1 of this series: “Understanding Bullying is the First Step Toward Preventing It” is available in English, Spanish and Portuguese at fcsn.org/newsletter/2019/fall1

Part 3, “What steps should the school do to prevent bullying and create a safe school environment?” will appear in the next edition of Newsline.
¿Qué deben hacer los padres si su hija o hijo es víctima de acoso en la escuela?

Segunda parte de una serie de tres artículos

Nota del editor: Este segmento de nuestra serie de tres artículos explica qué pueden hacer los padres para reconocer los signos de acoso y cómo pueden colaborar con el niño y la escuela para responder a la situación. La primera parte, “Comprender el acoso es el primer paso para prevenírlo”, está disponible en fcsn.org. El tercer segmento, que explica qué pueden hacer las escuelas para prevenir el acoso, aparecerá en nuestra próxima edición.

Tal vez reciba una llamada de la escuela. Quizás note que su hija o hijo está callado, molesto o que se siente enfermo. O tal vez le cuente historias terribles de lo que sucede en el aula. Usted ahora comprende que quizás sea víctima de acoso en la escuela. No todos los comportamientos crueles o dañinos son acoso. El acosador aprovecha un desequilibrio de poder para hacerle daño a alguien de forma repetitiva e intencional. Si cree que su hija o hijo es víctima de acoso en la escuela, ¿qué debería hacer?

Toda la familia tiene que apoyar al niño y hablar abiertamente sobre lo que está ocurriendo. El niño debe saber que ustedes lo escuchan. Pregúntenle qué pueden hacer para apoyarlo. Eviten repartir culpas y animen al niño a seguir comunicándose con ustedes. Pero traten de averiguar detalles sobre lo que hacen los acosadores (fechas, horas, lugares y acciones) y documenten todo.

Es difícil enterarse de que una hija o hijo se siente amenazado en la escuela. Ustedes querrán poner fin a la situación de inmediato. Pero el niño tiene que aprender a lidiar con el acoso: cómo reaccionar (o no reaccionar), dónde conseguir ayuda y con quién hablar. Ustedes tal vez quieran rescatar al niño, pero él o ella tiene que aprender las habilidades sociales y emocionales necesarias para lidiar con el problema por sí mismo.

La escuela es responsable de parar el acoso. Obtengan una copia de los reglamentos escolares contra el acoso para ver si el acosador los ha quebrantado. Infórmense sobre sus derechos. Hablen con el director de la escuela y pregúntenle cómo pueden colaborar para parar el acoso. Aténganse a los hechos sin dejarse llevar por las emociones. Vigilen las medidas que toma la escuela. Si el acoso continúa, presenten una queja formal.

Busquen a alguien que pueda abogar por su hija o hijo en la escuela, por ejemplo, el maestro del aula o un orientador vocacional. Explíquenle al niño que están colaborando con la escuela para prevenir el acoso. Díganle que cuando lo necesite, puede acudir a esa persona para pedirle ayuda. Tomar medidas por su

Continúa en a página 8.

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

SESPs are volunteer special education decision makers for eligible students who are in state custody.

- 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 for more information or 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.fcsn.org/rtsc   (617) 399-8342   rtsc@fcsn.org
Get Ready for Visions of Community Conference for Families of Children with Special Needs

FAQs About VOC

We understand. Attending a conference can be a bit overwhelming. To help, we’ve assembled a list of our most common questions so that you can get the answers you need.

When is the 2020 Visions of Community Conference (VOC)?
The VOC Conference will be Feb. 29 at the Seaport World Trade Center from 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

Who attends the VOC Conference? How many people will be at the conference?
Our conference is attended by over 1,000 parents, caregivers and professionals.

When does registration open? How can I register?
Registration is now open at www.fcsn.org and will close on Feb. 21.

Will I be able to register on the day of the conference?
Attendees can register the week leading up to VOC including the day of. However we encourage you to sign up soon to receive the early registration discount.

Who will be the keynote speaker?
Amy L. Kennedy, Education Director of The Kennedy Forum. Ms. Kennedy provides consultation services that emphasize evidence-based research and programming to facilitate policy change in education and mental health.

What meals are included? Will there be meals available for those with dietary restrictions?
Morning snacks of whole fresh fruit and granola bars will be available along with coffee.
Lunch offerings of assorted sandwiches, mixed green salad, assorted (nut-free) cookies, soda and coffee are included in your registration cost. Vegetarian and gluten-free/sugar-free options will be available.

Please visit our website to view our extended FAQ page that provides information about parking and directions, special accommodations and how to become an exhibitor.

Exciting Changes for the Becoming a Leader Youth Forum at VOC

By Nancy Mader, Project Director
LINK Center

We are coming up on our fifth annual Becoming a Leader Youth Forum at Visions of Community (VOC). In the previous four years we have had one group of youth and young adult self-advocates come together for a day of learning and fun. This year we are going to try something new. We are going to offer two tracks to better serve our youth.

We will have a track serving youth and young adults ages 14 to 26 that will focus on self-advocacy, health, creativity, and, most importantly, having fun and making new friends. This track will look much like the youth forums that we have held in previous years and will be open to any young person.

The second track, "College Navigator Bootcamp," will be hosted by the Easterseals Massachusetts. This track is designed for students 14 to 22 who are on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans and are on track to graduate with a high school diploma with the vision of going to college.

This track or "bootcamp" will cover the basics for what students should be doing in high school to prepare for college, such as understanding their accommodations and self-advocacy skills. It will be a great day to get students thinking about what they need to work on in high school to be prepared for college.

The youth forum and bootcamp will have separate registrations on the VOC website at www.fcsn.org.

If you have questions about the new options please email Nancy Mader at nmader@fcsn.org.


What's in a name?

¿Qué deben hacer los padres si su hija o hijo es víctima de acoso en la escuela?

Continuación de la página 5.

cuenta le da al niño sensación de control y le ayuda a sentirse menos impotente.

Hay cosas que su hija o hijo puede hacer para controlar lo que pasa en la escuela. En el hogar, practiquen maneras de ignorar al acosador. Hablen sobre formas seguras de responder a situaciones que podrían ser peligrosas. Con los estudiantes de más edad, tal vez tengan que aprender a parar el ciberacoso de maneras discretas. Ayuden al niño hay identificar un amigo en el aula o a formar una red de apoyo con compañeros de confianza. El niño no puede evitar que otros digan cosas feas, pero sí puede controlar cómo responde.

Ayúdenle a encontrar una actividad en la que le vaya bien. Puede ser algo después de clase, como los Boy Scouts, las Girl Scouts o la natación. Encontrar una actividad en la que el niño tenga éxito fomenta la buena autoestima. Las experiencias positivas le ayudan a sentirse bien con respecto a sí mismo y aumentan su resiliencia y confianza para contrarrestar las maneras en que los acosadores hacen que se sienta.

Las familias también tienen que buscar apoyo. Hable con su cónyuge o pareja, sus familiares y amigos. Es importante que analicen sus sentimientos para estar disponibles para apoyar a su hija o hijo. Aunque más no sea, esto puede ayudarles a darse cuenta de que no están solos y de que no hay nada malo con su niño.

El acoso no es algo que un niño pueda superar de un día para otro. Puede ser un proceso largo. Ayudarle a desarrollar una buena autoestima, a encontrar personas que lo puedan ayudar y a controlar mejor la situación le permitirá ser exitoso.

Recursos:
- https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/parents/helping-your-child.asp
- https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/bullying
- https://cyberbullying.org/resources/teens

“Thanks to the Federation, I’m breaking the generational cycle. I never want my sons to struggle like I did in school.”

- Zuleka Queen-Postell

fcsn.org/donate
Pode receber uma ligação da escola. Pode notar que seu filho está retraído, chateado ou se sentindo doente. Seu filho pode contar histórias terríveis sobre o que está acontecendo na escola.

Agora você está ciente de que seu filho pode estar sendo vítima de bullying na escola. Nem todo o comportamento mau ou ofensivo é realmente bullying. O bullying depende de um desequilíbrio de poder para maltratar alguém de forma repetitiva e deliberada. Que medidas você pode tomar se achar que seu filho é vítima de bullying na escola?

A família inteira precisa apoiar a criança e ser aberta sobre o que está acontecendo. A criança precisa saber que você está prestando atenção. Pergunte ao seu filho o que você pode fazer para ajudar. Não culpe ninguém e incentive seu filho a manter uma boa comunicação com você. Mas tente descobrir os detalhes sobre o que os agressores estão fazendo, tal como datas, horários, lugares, ações e documento tudo.

É difícil ouvir que o seu filho se sente ameaçado na escola. O seu impulso é de querer parar o que está acontecendo. Mas seu filho precisa aprender a lidar com o bullying, como reagir (ou não) e como obter ajuda ou conversar com alguém sobre isso. Você pode querer resgatar seu filho, mas ele precisa desenvolver habilidades sociais e emocionais para lidar com isso sozinho.


Ache um protetor para o seu filho na escola, como um professor ou um orientador. Diga ao seu filho que você está trabalhando com a escola para prevenir o bullying. Peça ao seu filho para procurar esse funcionário da escola quando precisar de assistência. Tomar medidas por conta própria dará à criança algum controle sobre a situação e a ajudará a se sentir menos impotente.

Há coisas que uma criança pode fazer para lidar com a situação na escola. Pratique situações hipotéticas em casa para o seu filho aprender como ignorar um agressor. Fale sobre maneiras seguras de agir em situações que possam ser perigosas. Para alunos mais velhos, você pode precisar aprender como parar o cyberbullying com discreção. Ajude seu filho a identificar um amigo em sua classe ou a criar uma rede de apoio de colegas confiáveis. O seu filho não pode evitar que as pessoas digam coisas más, mas ele pode aprender a controlar a forma em que reage.

Ajudê seu filho a identificar algo que ele sabe fazer bem. Pode ser uma atividade fora da escola, como escotismo ou natação. Essa experiência positiva ajudará seu filho a se sentir bem consigo mesmo, desenvolvendo resiliência e confiança. Isso ajudará a neutralizar a forma negativa como os agressores o fazem se sentir.

As famílias devem pedir apoio. Converse com o seu cônjuge, família ou amigos que o ajarden de apoiar. É importante você resolver os seus próprios sentimentos para estar disponível para apoiar seu filho. Pelo menos isto pode ajudá-lo a sentir que não está sozinho e que não há nada de errado com o seu filho.

O bullying não é algo que seu filho vai superar imediatamente. Pode ser um longo processo. Ajude o seu filho a criar uma boa autoestima e encontrar pessoas que o ajudem a ter algum controle sobre a situação permitirão que ele supere a situação.

Recursos:
https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/parents/helping-your-child.asp
https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/bullying
By Mary-Beth Landy
Trainer, Support and Recruitment Specialist
Recruitment, Training, and Support Center (RTSC) for Special Education Surrogate Parents

Wow, what a year it has been! The Recruitment, Training and Support Center for Special Education Surrogate Parents (RTSC) has been in the forefront of a lot of changes and growth at the Federation.

We welcomed Ivone Rego as our new Project Associate, and Eileen Sandberg, as our Training and Support Specialist for Eastern Massachusetts. I have moved from the Boston office to Western Massachusetts. Renee Williams continues as our steadfast Project Director leading us through all of these transitions, while Jean Willoughby continues to serve as our Outreach and Recruitment Specialist.

While we continue to seek and train volunteers throughout the year, one particular time really stands out for the project and for many individuals who work tirelessly for the most vulnerable youth in our state. That would be RTSC’s Making a Difference Conference. This year’s conference was a huge success. I find that the timing of the conference is ideal, as it is just before Thanksgiving. And what better time to have an event that says “thank you” to all the wonderful volunteers who assist our students?

This year’s conference hosted fabulous speakers, such as Steve Pemberton, author of “A Chance In The World” and Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer for Walgreens. Steve shared his life’s story of growing up in the foster-care system, in a way that was, as one attendee put it: “An inspiration to all! Be a lighthouse in someone else’s life!”

Over 200 attendees soaked in the information from nine workshops as well as a variety of other speakers including State Auditor Suzanne Bump, Commissioner Linda Spears from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and Timothy Gallagher from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

I want to say a special thanks to everyone at the Federation and the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program (SESPP/EDCO) for your assistance and support in making this day happen. This is a program and conference that is vital to the support of individuals working with our students. I cannot put it better than one presenter, who said, “Both the FCSN and SESPP/RTSC are close to my heart as I feel it is vital that parents and SESP’s have training and support for their roles as it is so demanding and dynamic. DCF students need more than a village - they need a whole metropolis!”

So as the New Year begins, take some time to reflect on all of the good work that you do for students throughout the commonwealth. The RTSC Project wishes you all a Happy New Year!
New Skills ● No Scores!
Research Study

A sport sampling and nutrition education study for teens with intellectual disabilities (ID) ages 12-16 yrs

OVERVIEW

- The New Skills ● No Scores program is a Sport Sampling and Nutrition Education study for teens with ID.
- The research team is from UMass Medical School, UMass-Boston, and Tufts University School of Medicine
- The goal is to build knowledge, skills, confidence, and motivation to live an active and healthy lifestyle
- Sport Sampling gives teens the opportunity to try different sports to find what they like and to practice basic movement skills
- Nutrition Education includes learning about healthy eating, trying new foods, and learning to make healthy snacks

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?
Teens with an intellectual disability (ID) ages 12-16 years who are able to:
- communicate verbally in English
- walk without assistance
- participate in a group sport program

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

- Brief phone screen and in-person enrollment meeting are required to confirm eligibility
- Teens participate in a fun, non-competitive sport sampling and nutrition education program with peers 1x/week. Trained instructors lead games and activities
- Motor skill assessment and short survey(s) two times for teens and their parents

WHERE & WHEN?

- Sundays from 10:00 am -12:00 pm - beginning March 1• 2020
- Program is for 12 weeks – March to June
- At the Boys and Girls Club in Woburn, MA
- There is no cost to participate

To see if your teen qualifies or for more information call us at 774-570-2207 email us at N2S2study@umassmed.edu
-OR-
Check out our website at: https://shriver.umassmed.edu/research
At the Federation for Children with Special Needs, we want all children to grow up and live in a healthy, clean environment. So, we decided to slightly decrease our impact on the climate by reducing the number of printed and mailed Newsline newsletters. Please sign up to receive the digital version of Newsline via email. You can do so in three ways: 1. Go to our website fcsn.org. On the right side of the homepage you’ll see “Updates Via Email” with a button that will take you to a form to enter your email address and name. Simple as that. 2. Complete the form below and mail it to: The Federation for Children with Special Needs 529 Main St. | Suite 1M3 | Boston, MA 02129 3. Call us at 800-331-0688 to provide your information. However, if the print version is the better way for you to receive Newsline, please let us know by calling 800-331-0688. Otherwise we will assume you want us to remove your name from our postal mailing list.

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Email address: _____________________________________________________

Comments: ________________________________________________________

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