The WRCP Summer Family In-door Picnic

Every summer, the Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP) hosts a Family Summer In-door Picnic. This event is attended by families whose lives have been touched by the WRCP.

The event begins at 4 pm and as families arrive they are greeted by staff from the WRCP, representatives from the Department of Public Health including Care Coordinators and the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project.

It is a well attended event that features on opportunity for families to enjoy time with family and friends dancing, eating and enjoying the scenic views from The Log Cabin in Holyoke, MA. Read on to hear what parents had to say.

The Western Regional Consultation Program (RCP) is one of 6 RCP programs statewide that provide services to medically complex children and their families.

Great people, great venue, and great time!

by Vitaliy Kuyarov

My family and I have had a great opportunity to attend the WRCP Indoor Picnic for the second time this year at the Log Cabin in Holyoke, MA. The location of this event is just spectacular with fantastic views on the outside. It was a great welcome for me and my family to break away from a daily grind and busyness and come to this wonderful party to celebrate the life of all the children with special needs who attended it.

This social event was very well organized with both kids and parents in mind. The food was very tasty and desserts were really delicious and satisfied our cravings at the end. Another highlight of the event was the Dance Floor. The DJ did an excellent job of entertaining young and old alike. My two younger children really enjoyed themselves dancing away with the rest of the crowd. After dancing, kids can just venture outside for fresh air and take a look around at beautiful views of nature.

This Summer Get Together event was a warm and positive experience for us as a family. It was really nice to meet old friends and other people we met before at other WRCP events. It was nice and refreshing to be able to talk with other parents who are going through the same challenges as we are. In my personal opinion, this type of gatherings are very important and instrumental because here you are understood the most and can learn and share your experiences and challenges with other parents and at the same time have some fun with your kids. This is why we always try to attend as many WRCP events as possible. I hope to be there next year and see you all there.

Gente maravillosa, lugar espléndido, ¡pasé una momento genial!

Por Vitaliy Kuyarov

Mi familia y yo tuvimos la gran oportunidad de asistir al picnic bajo techo del Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP) por segunda vez este año en el Log Cabin de la ciudad de Holyoke, Massachusetts. La ubicación de este evento es simplemente espectacular, con vistas panorámicas fantásticas. Para mi familia y para mí fue una gran satisfacción dejar atrás el ajetreo de la rutina cotidiana y venir a esta fiesta maravillosa para celebrar la vida de todos los niños con necesidades especiales que concurrieron. Esta reunión social estuvo muy bien organizada, teniendo en mente a los niños y a los padres. La sabrosa comida y los deliciosos postres nos dejaron más que satisfechos. Otro punto destacado fue la pista de baile. El disc-jockey hizo un trabajo excelente, entreteniendo tanto a los jóvenes como a los viejos. Mis dos hijos pequeños se divirtieron una enorme bailando con el resto de la gente. Después del baile, los niños pudieron salir afuera y disfrutar del aire fresco y de las hermosas vistas de la naturaleza.

Continúa en la página 3
Dear Families,

October is NCSEAM Family Survey month. All Early Intervention programs distribute Family Surveys in October and March to all families whose children have been enrolled in EI for over six months and who did not complete a Survey in the previous distribution. Families complete one Survey a year. If you fit this description, you will be receiving a Family Survey from your Service Coordinator sometime during the month of October.

The Survey measures three important Family Outcomes that are reported to the Federal Office of Special Education (OSEP). It also provides important information to your EI Program and the Department of Public Health (DPH), Lead Agency for Part C Early Intervention services, about how effective the services you receive are. Your answers on the Survey measure your opinion about the extent to which:

- Early Intervention services help families know their rights
- Early Intervention services help families effectively communicate their children’s needs
- Early Intervention services help families help their children develop and learn

This year we are able to make the Family Survey available in Vietnamese, Portuguese and Haitian Creole as well as in English and Spanish. Let your Service Coordinator which language works best for you.

When you receive your Survey in October, please complete it, in pencil, and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope you got with the Survey. Your feedback is very important to your EI program and to DPH.

Family Survey Frequently Asked Questions

1. My first language is Portuguese, but I read better in English. Can I have the Survey in both languages and see which one is easier for me?

Talk to your Service Coordinator. He or she will have the Survey available in both languages and may be able to let you compare the two. Please be sure to only complete and return ONE Survey!

2. Why do I have to fill out the Survey in pencil? I get a lot of surveys in the mail and none of them say "pencil only."

Surveys are returned to a company in Florida where they are scanned into a database so that the information can be analyzed. The scanning machine only recognizes pencil. Surveys filled out in ink are not usable, so the information you provide won’t be recorded.

La encuesta mide tres resultados importantes para las familias que se informan a Oficina de Programas de Educación Especial (Federal Office of Special Education, OSEP). También le da información importante a su Programa del Intervención Temprana y al Departamento de Salud Pública (el organismo principal a cargo de la Parte C de los servicios de IT) sobre la eficacia de los servicios que usted ha recibido. Las respuestas miden la opinión de los padres con respecto al grado en que los servicios de IT ayudan a las familias a:

- conocer sus derechos,
- comunicar eficazmente las necesidades de sus niños, y
- promover el desarrollo y el aprendizaje.

Este año, la encuesta está disponible en vietnamita, portugués y haitiano criollo, además de inglés y español. Dígale a su Coordinador de Servicios qué idioma prefiere.

Cuando reciba su encuesta en octubre, complétela con lápiz y envíela en el sobre provisto con franqueo y dirección de destino. Sus comentarios son muy importantes para su programa del IT y para el Departamento de Salud Pública.

Preguntas comunes sobre la encuesta familiar

1. Mi lengua materna es el portugués, pero leo mejor en inglés. ¿Puedo recibir la encuesta en los dos idiomas para ver cuál me resulta más fácil?

Hable con su coordinador de servicios. Él o ella tendrá la encuesta en ambos idiomas y tal vez pueda dejar que usted las compare para ver cuál prefiere. Pero por favor, complete y entregue una sola encuesta.

¿Por qué tengo que contestar la encuesta con lápiz? Recibo muchas encuestas por correo y ninguna dice "con lápiz solamente".

Las encuestas se envían a una compañía de Florida que las escanea e incorpora a una base de datos para analizar la información. La máquina reconoce solamente las marcas con lápiz. Las encuestas completadas con tinta no sirven. Si responde con tinta, la información que comparte no se registrará.
Este verano, la reunión fue una experiencia cálida y positiva para nosotros como familia. Fue muy agradable reencontrarnos con viejos amigos y con otras personas que habíamos conocido en eventos anteriores del WRCP. La oportunidad de hablar con otros padres que enfrentan desafíos similares a los nuestros fue reconfortante y refrescante. Para mí, estos encuentros son muy importantes y útiles porque uno se siente mejor comprender y puede aprender y compartir sus experiencias y retos con otros padres y, al mismo tiempo, divertirse a lo grande con los hijos. Es por eso que tratamos de asistir a la mayor cantidad posible de eventos del WRCP. El año próximo espero estar allí y verlos otra vez a todos.

Gente maravillosa, lugar espléndido, ¡pasé una momento genial!
Por Vitaliy Kuyarov

The WRCP Summer In-door Picnic is a fun event. This was our second time attending. It warms my heart to see how much all the children we have gotten to know have grown and how excited they are to be there. This event is scheduled perfectly towards the end of summer before the fall season starts and in time for many kids and families to start a new chapter.

The staff is always excited to see everyone and asks for family updates. The venue at the Log Cabin is amazing and is a perfect setting for helping families to feel welcomed, happy, special and loved.

The In-door Picnic has given me great connections with families and new friends. Without this event, and other events by WRCP, it is easy to get lost or lonely in the day-to-day shuffle with our children's needs. WRCP helps families like mine, feel like they're not alone and its okay to have fun. It's nice to know that this organization is a phone call away to answer questions and find help. But what makes the WRCP events different from other events is the staff. Everyone at the WRCP cares and remembers you and your family. They ask how are you and how it's going, with compassion. They truly understand everyone's struggles in some way or form and truly want to help. That is why each event they host is an event that I try not to miss.

A Mom’s Perspective of the WRCP Family Summer In-door Picnic
by Carla Forbes
La perspectiva de Carla sobre el picnic de verano del WRCP
Por Carla Forbes

El picnic de verano bajo techo del Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP) es un evento muy divertido. Esta fue la segunda que asistimos. Me conmueve ver cuánto han crecido y cómo se emocionan por estar ahí todos los niños que hemos llegado a conocer con el tiempo. La reunión se programa en un momento muy oportuno, entre el final del verano y el comienzo del otoño, cuando muchos niños y familias están por iniciar un nuevo capítulo en sus vidas.

El personal está siempre entusiasmado por vernos a todos y ansioso por enterarse de la últimas novedades de nuestras familias. La ubicación del Log Cabin es espectacular, un lugar perfecto para que nos sintamos bienvenidos, felices, especiales y queridos.

Esta actividad me ha permitido formar lazos importantes con otras familias y nuevas amistades. Sin ésta y otras actividades del WRCP, sería fácil sentirse perdido o solo en el ajetreo cotidiano de nuestros niños con necesidades especiales. El WRCP ayuda a que familias como la mía se sientan acompañadas y con derecho a divertirse. Es bueno saber que basta una llamada de teléfono para recibir respuestas y ayuda de esta organización. Pero lo que verdaderamente distingue a los eventos del WRCP es el personal. Todos recuerdan y se preocupan por nosotros y nuestras familias. Nos preguntan cómo estamos y cómo nos va con genuina compasión. Realmente entienden de alguna manera nuestra lucha y se muestran deseosos por apoyarnos. Es por eso que trato de no perderme ninguno de los eventos que auspician.

Save the Dates * Save the Dates * Save the Dates * Save the Dates * Save the Dates

Federation for Children with Special Needs—Visions of Community Conference
Saturday, March 7, 2015
Seaport World Trade Center, Boston, MA

Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) 35th Annual Conference
Wednesday, May 6 & Thursday, May 7, 2015
Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, Marlborough, MA
Learn about the DPH “Together We’re Ready – Massachusetts Prepared” Campaign at: mass.gov/dph/ready

September is Emergency Preparedness month and a very good time to review your own personal and family situation. Check your emergency plan if you have one to be sure it still meets your needs. Create an emergency plan if you don’t have one.

Emergency planning is important for everyone, but especially important if you have a child with a disability or special health need. The more prepared you are, the more likely it is that you and your family will come through an emergency successfully.

If we think at all about emergencies, what usually comes to mind is a major snowstorm, heavy rains or even a hurricane or tornado. Don’t forget that there are many other emergent things that can occur, such as power outages, particularly difficult if your child relies on technology, fires, chemical spills or unexpected events at school just to name a few.

Here are some resources to help you get started. Remember now is the time to start planning.

- If your child has special health needs, make sure the people who can help know about it. You can download and fill out a Disability Indicator Form - disability indicator form that lets Police, Fire and Ambulance services know about your child’s special circumstances.
- Create a Family Emergency Plan and an Emergency Kit

The Bureau of Family Health & Nutrition works closely with the DPH Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management to share information and provide supports.

To see sample forms, check lists, get information on preparing an emergency kit and find many other resources to help you prepare go to: mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/emergency-prep/personal-prep/get-ready-individual-family.html

Visit Mass Family TIES at massfamilyties.org/info/ep.php or call toll free at: 800-905-8437

Take part in a Twitter Chat: Emergency Preparedness for Little Ones, hosted by twitter.com/PHEgov

Follow the chat by using #Prep4Kids in all of your tweets

The Chat will include experts from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and will cover a number of topics including:

- ways that parents and caregivers can prepare for the needs of young children before, during and after disaster strikes;
- recognizing the ways that your child’s changing needs impact your family’s preparedness plan;
- planning with all of the people who take care of your child, like daycare providers, babysitters, grandparents and other caregivers.

This month, Massachusetts Health and Human Services Secretary John Polanowicz announced an infant safe sleep campaign focused on the importance of infant safe sleep practices and promoting ways to reduce risks associated with Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), the leading cause of death among infants between the ages of one to 11 months and often associated with unsafe sleep practices.

“Unsafe sleeping among newborns is a public health issue here in Massachusetts and across the country. The good news is that it is often preventable. By providing public education and targeting training and resources, we can give parents, guardians and caregivers the tools they need to reduce the risk and promote positive brain activity that comes with safe sleep.” — HHS Secretary Polanowicz

Getting safe sleep messages to parents and caregivers in the far reaching and diverse communities of the Commonwealth takes the concerted effort of many organizations and individuals who share an interest in promoting infant health. In order to support the initiative of the Secretariat, the Early Intervention Training Center at The Department of Public Health is initiating a project for delivering training and technical assistance to all Massachusetts early intervention home visitors so that they have the knowledge necessary to address the topic of Safe Sleep with the families they serve. Over the next several months, Early Intervention practitioners will receive this training at their program sites and be sharing its message with you, their families. Parent trainers, with experience in and knowledge of the Massachusetts Early Intervention system, will be key members of the teams presenting these trainings. These trainings will provide your practitioner with a detailed description of the Safe Sleep initiative and its practices so that they can support you as a parent in assuring your infants health and safety.
DID YOU KNOW?
Early Intervention Training Center online trainings are available to parents? Interested in one of our topics? Take an online class! Visit the EITC website at
www.eitrainingcenter.org

Trainings include topics such as:
- Infant Brain Development
- Early Intervention Home Visiting
- The Process of Developing an IFSP
- Supporting Infant & Early Childhood Social-Emotional Well-being

The EITC is always seeking parents and other family members who have an interest and skill in professional development to join our training team. If you would like additional information about becoming a workshop facilitator, please contact Jean Nigro at jean.nigro@state.ma.us.

Federation for Children with Special Needs
www.fcsn.org
800-331-0688

Turning Three—Provides information about the required process for transitioning a child from Early Intervention (IE) to special education. Discussion includes EI transition planning, special education eligibility, the Team process and the parent’s role in planning, making decisions and monitoring their child’s progress.

Basic Rights—Provides families with a foundation knowledge needed to understand special education workshop topics. This workshop introduces participants to the federal and state special education laws, special education process, parent and student rights and how to resolve differences with the school.

An IEP for My Child—Describes the Individualized Education Program (IEP) document, its development, how to articulate a vision and write measurable annual goals and how to monitor a child’s progress. A sample IEP Writing Guide is provided to assist participants in understanding the IEP.

Family TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide parent-to-parent information and support network for families of children with disabilities, special healthcare needs, or chronic illnesses, and their providers. We are an Alliance Member of Parent to Parent USA, a national organization that provides technical assistance to parent-to-parent programs across the country. For more information, call 800-905-TIES (8437) or visit www.massfamilyties.org.

Most parents will agree, life is full of unexpected occurrences. This is especially true in our community of parents of children with special needs. In times of emergency, the likelihood of performing well under stress can be improved if parents spend some time planning for emergencies before they happen.

What is an emergency, you might ask? Here in Massachusetts, we are most familiar with natural disasters, especially weather-related problems like power outages because of heavy snow or rain storms. Man-made disasters may include a house fire or gas leak in the neighborhood. Unexpected mishaps, seemingly smaller issues in scale, could include when the school bus arrives before Mom gets home from work, or situations that risk health and safety, like running low on medical supplies during a storm.

Since 2004, Family TIES has worked with the Mass. Department of Public Health (MDPH) to support the information needs of families who want to be certain that in times of emergencies, their children’s special health care needs will be addressed. Families are encouraged to:

1. **Make a Plan** to address the types of emergencies that may affect your family and child. Review, update, and practice your Plan with your family periodically.
2. **Make a Kit** that addresses basic needs for your family, including emergency information, prescriptions and medications, and first aid and medical supplies; also prepare a storage container with 3 days of nonperishable food, drinking water, and emergency items such as flashlights, and a portable radio for times when you must “shelter in place.”
3. **Make Your Plans Known** to family and those who can assist, in an emergency, as communication and support are critical details in your planning process. Know emergency responders and contacts in your community.

One of the first steps to consider, to raise awareness of your child’s special needs, would be to complete the Disability Indicator Form. This basic form, tells the Emergency Management Director (EMD) for your community that your family is more likely than most families to need special assistance due to special health care concerns. The program is free and effective. Download the form and contact information for your EMD from the Family TIES website:

www.massfamilyties.org/info/ep.php

Do it today, for peace of mind!

For more information on this important topic, please contact Family TIES at 800-905-TIES (8437) and visit the Mass. Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management resources: www.mass.gov and search for Emergency Preparedness.
ACROYNMS DEMYSTIFIED...

Try to find these commonly used acronyms.

NCSEAM - National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring
DPH - Department of Public Health
CDC - Center for Disease Control
MEIC - Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium
FERPA - Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
HIPPA - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IDEA - Individuals with Disability Education Act
IEP - Individualized Education Program/Plan
IFSP - Individualized Family Service Plan
PC - Parent Contact
THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The EI Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP) strives to develop an informed parent constituency, promote leadership and lifelong advocacy skills for parents and family members, facilitate family participation to ensure that Early Intervention Services are family-centered and support EI programs to identify, train and mentor families to take on roles across the EI and Early Childhood system. The Project is a parent driven endeavor, which continually seeks family involvement and input regarding the needs of families enrolled in Early Intervention and is implemented by parents whose own children have received EI services. The Project staff consists of a Statewide Director, a Media Coordinator, a Communications Coordinator, an EI Program Focused Monitoring Parent Coordinator and an Education Coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

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On the web: www.eiplp.org

Help us to save paper and postage!
E-mail your name and e-mail address to: eiplp@live.com. Thanks!

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To receive the Parent Perspective Newsletter, a free publica-
tion, published four times a year by the Parent Leadership  
Project, call us toll-free at (877) 353-4757 and ask to  
be added to the EIPLP mailing list or email eiplp@live.com

NEXT DEADLINE: We welcome your input, suggestions for resources and  
articles. Please call our toll-free number (877) 353-4757 or email the newsletter  
editor at kris.levine@state.ma.us.

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follow EIPLP on Twitter!