



## April 2024

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### Dear Friends of South Shore Support Services,

April is Autism Acceptance Month. Transition Abilities reminds us this month that autism acceptance is important for several reasons:

- It helps make our society more welcoming and understanding.
- When we embrace neurodiversity and recognize the uniqueness of each autistic individual, we make it easier for them to be included and respected.
- Autism acceptance can lead to better opportunities for autistic people to participate in the community and to contribute their talents.
- By accepting autism, we challenge wrong ideas and stereotypes about it.
- It helps take care of the mental health of an autistic person. When someone feels accepted and understood, they are less likely to feel stressed or anxious. In short, autism acceptance is essential for building a kinder, more welcoming world where everyone feels valued and supported.

Autism acceptance is a movement that both promotes understanding and supporting autistic people. It's the principle that autism is just a *different* way of being, not a lesser way of being. Acceptance means treating autistic individuals with kindness and respect, just like we would treat everyone else. A person's differences are a normal part of life; we can appreciate autistic people for who they are. Instead of thinking of autism as something negative or needing to be fixed, we should celebrate the differences it brings.

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### Help Our Training Department Increase the Virtual Reality Experience

We at SSSS are proud of our initiatives to bring the benefits of a virtual reality (VR) experience to our staff and to those we support. With four new VR modules in development with our collaborative team (SSSS, RTR, Work Inc. and the ARC of Northern Bristol), we will be rolling out four beneficial new VR modules. We have had many paid volunteers from throughout our programs testing the content and providing feedback for the best experiences. We also have training modules for staff to get a better understanding of different experiences of people we support. Through a generous grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield, we were able to purchase headsets for the training department. As we gain knowledge, we have learned that peripherals will make the experience even better. Any donations from this month's newsletter will go toward the purchase of headset straps, face gaskets, and cases for when the headsets go to different sites. If you are

interested in supporting this new, innovative initiative, please visit our website to donate.

Visit our Website

## "Blue Envelope" Bill Passes Senate

**Driver on the autism spectrum:**

- Keep your hands on the steering wheel and otherwise focused, even if the officer is not at your car.
- Remember the officer may show a flashlight in your car, may have a radio and may have flashing lights on their car.
- When the officer goes to your car say "I have a blue envelope".
- Answer the officer's questions and ask the officer before moving any parts of your body.
- When the officer tells you, slowly get the blue envelope that has your license, registration and insurance card and hand the envelope to the officer.
- The officer will go back to their station, you will need to wait for the officer and for the officer back.
- When the officer comes back to your car, they will explain the end of the stop to you and will tell you when to leave.

**Important Papers!**

Sponsored By

DMV

MASSACHUSETTS POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

For more information:  
[portal.ct.gov/DMV-Blue-Envelope](http://portal.ct.gov/DMV-Blue-Envelope)

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Autism Speaks

Police Officer:  
A. Individuals with driver registration held documents or holding and may have information related.  
B. Do not use or hold copies of such records, especially that is highly confidential and under the state rules.

On January 4, the Massachusetts' Senate unanimously passed legislation filed by Sen. Joanne Comerford of Northampton and supported by UMass Amherst stakeholders that seeks to facilitate better interactions between police and individuals with autism spectrum disorder. The measure, known as the "Blue Envelope" bill, was championed by UMass Disability Services and UMass Amherst Police Chief Tyrone Parham.

The bill now moves to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for consideration. The legislation would create a voluntary program to make available special blue envelopes to people with autism spectrum disorder that hold their driver's license, registration, and insurance card, which can be handed to a police officer in the event of a traffic stop. On the outside of the envelope would be specific instructions on the driver's diagnosis, impairments, triggers, emergency contact information, and best practices for communicating.

"Massachusetts' police officers conduct thousands of traffic stops each year. While most of these interactions are relatively 'routine,' officers do not know who they are interacting with before the traffic stop, so they proceed with caution. Each driver reacts differently when they are pulled over by the police," Parham said. "The introduction of the blue envelope under stressful interactions will provide immediate information and context to the officer as they begin to communicate. This will be instrumental to help bridge the communication gap for both motorists and police officers."

"I am deeply grateful to Senate President Karen Spilka, Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues, Transportation Chair Brendan Crighton and my colleagues for passing this important legislation," Comerford said. "The Blue Envelope bill will make our Commonwealth a safer place for people who are neuro-diverse. It moves us closer to equal opportunity and access for people of all abilities."

For drivers with autism spectrum disorder, being stopped by a police officer can

be particularly challenging. At times, law enforcement officers or other first responders have had little or no training about how to communicate appropriately with people with autism spectrum disorder. In other states, such as Connecticut, a similar voluntary program has been shown to reduce stress, facilitate better communication, and improve safety.

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## **Honoring the Life of Cathy Duggan**



Cathy Duggan was a long-term board member for South Shore Support Services and a fierce advocate for the people we support. After graduating from Springfield College, Cathy worked as a recreational specialist at St. Coletta Day School in Braintree. She was area coordinator for Norfolk County Special Olympics, as well. After many years in these fields, she decided to give banking a try, starting in Customer Services for BayBank. She then moved into the branches working for Fleet Bank, BankBoston, Bank of America, and Rockland Trust Company. She rose from teller to branch manager, managing many branches, ending as manager of the Cohasset branch. Cathy combined her strong financial skills and her empathy and compassion to make a sincere positive impact on the people we support, the staff of SSSS, her fellow board members, and all who knew her.

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## **4th Annual Spring Soiree**

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Get ready to be a part of something truly special! South Shore Support Services is thrilled to invite you to our 4th Annual Spring Soiree! Join us on Friday, May 31, at the Hingham Community Center from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. This event celebrates the incredible individuals and families we support, showcasing the talents and achievements of our participants.

# 4th Annual Spring Soiree

## To Benefit South Shore Support Services

Please Join Us  
Friday, May 31, 2024

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Hingham Community Center  
70 South Street



Tickets and Sponsorship  
Opportunities

**Our New Home for Human Resources,  
Training, and Adult Family Care**



We are excited to move these department to 302 Weymouth Street, Rockland, in April. Please follow our spring newsletters and Facebook page for an invitation to an upcoming open house.

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## Caregiver Remote Respite Update

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Our new Respite Innovation grant from MassHealth is underway! We've begun signing caregivers up for blocks of respite time and they love it! The grant funds a new initiative allowing us to monitor individuals in their home while the caregiver takes a much-needed break. We use the latest in Assistive Technology (AT) tablets to communicate verbally and visually for check-ins with the individual in the home. Although we're leading with remote support, we can be there in person in a flash when needed.

Eligible families must have a caregiver over the age of 60 who is not already receiving AFC or state-funded benefits for respite.

To participate in our respite pilot program, contact our Program Manager Jeanne Smith at 781-927-9670 or [jsmith@soshoresupport.org](mailto:jsmith@soshoresupport.org), and she can qualify you with a few intake questions. If eligible, you'll be on your way to free time!

## The ARC of MA Transition Conference e

Pre-Transition Conference Webinars

Register to join The Arc on April 27 for the 2024 Transition Conference!  
Preparing for Adult Services and Leaving School

Wednesday, March 27 @ 12:00PM

Is your loved one in need of adult services after leaving school? In this webinar, you will learn about the best practices to prepare for services and supports after Turning 22. What should the transition plan and IEP be focusing on? What do you

need to prepare for services from the Department of Developmental Services?  
What other types of support can you receive to help prepare for this transition?

#### Transition Timelines with Andrea Morris (English)

Tuesday, April 2 @ 1:00PM

Join us to discuss transition timelines to help prepare students and their families for the world beyond secondary education. The webinar will address transition planning, services, and benefits available to young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities ages 14-22.

#### Transition Timelines with Rowan DeAza (Spanish)

Tuesday, April 2 @ 2:00PM

Join us to discuss transition timelines to help prepare students and their families for the world beyond secondary education. The webinar will address transition planning, services, and benefits available to young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities ages 14-22.

#### Transition from School to Adult Life: Using the IEP to Create Success

Tuesday, April 9 @ 12:00PM

This workshop will address the transition planning and services required for youth with disabilities ages 14-22 and will focus on the transition services districts should provide to prepare youth for employment, independent living, and further education. Using case examples, parents and professionals will learn strategies that can help ensure students receive important transition services required by special education law. The workshop will also provide information about the transition to the adult human service system, including Chapter 688, the state law that helps plan for youth with disabilities after they leave school.

To register go to the ARC of MA Newsletter at  
<https://thearcofmass.org/advocate/>

## Proposed PCA Service Cuts



MassHealth has potential plans to cut an estimated 6,000 people from Personal Care Assistants (PCA) services. Those impacted by MassHealth cuts would be people receiving 10 or less hours/week of assistance with activities of daily living (such as assistance with eating and toileting), including people who may also be receiving 10 hours/week of services with instrumental activities of daily living (such as assistance with laundry and shopping). MassHealth also proposes to place evaluations for the program in a central entity, which could lead to a

medical model of service and a reduction of services. Additionally, they propose to reduce meal prep time from 13 hours/week to 7 hours/week.

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## The Red Panic Button



The application enables users to push a central button and allow immediate contact with various emergency services, providing instant details of your location. By pushing the Red Button, the application will send your current position and address (in the form of a Google Maps link) to all the numbers found in your panic contact list, not only a single person as the case with standard SMS. Such a list can be a true life saver in difficult situations. People who receive a panic message from you should be able to respond as quickly and as efficiently as possible. This is why the app also sends your latest acquired location address to them. Some of the most appraised smartwatches like the Apple Watch, Android Wear and Pebble, or the Bluetooth Panic Button which is a wearable button, also support safety-entered apps like the Red Panic Button. There are countless of distress situations when you can't (or you are not recommended to) use a smartphone, even if you have the Panic Button installed on it. A proper smartwatch allows you to discretely and efficiently make use of the app and send a distress message (containing an alert and a GPS location) to your preset list of emergency contacts. A group of people using the same app and smartwatches can stay close together and thus make any search & rescue or emergency intervention faster and easier.

## Google Maps Now Has A Wheelchair Accessibility Feature



People can now turn on an “Accessible Places” feature to have wheelchair accessibility information more prominently displayed in Google Maps. When Accessible Places is switched on, a wheelchair icon will indicate an accessible entrance, and you’ll be able to see if a place has accessible seating, restrooms, or parking. If it’s confirmed that a place does not have an accessible entrance, Google will show that information on Maps, as well. Users can even zoom in on streets to see if the curbs are lowered, an essential point for people in wheelchairs who want to get around in the city. The app can be extremely helpful if you are a wheelchair user with several features especially designed for you showing the exact locations of elevators and ramps in an area. You just need to select the “wheelchair accessible” option when you’re planning your route. If using public transportation, Google Maps can even inform you on which modes of transport might work best for you. Whether one wants to shop or eat at a restaurant, people with mobility challenges can easily find which places are accessible by doing the following:

- On your smartphone or computer, open Google Maps.
- In the search bar, enter your destination.
- In the list of results, click the location you want.
- Click Directions and then Transit.
- Click Options.
- Under “Routes,” click Wheelchair accessible.
- Choose your route.

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## Family Support Center Updates

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### May 2024 CHAMPS Housing Application Session At Our Family Support Office



The Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Programs (CHAMP) training provides 1:1 support to complete the CHAMP application online. This



application will put you or your family member on the centralized waitlist for a mobile housing subsidy. The process takes about an hour to complete and will include a follow-up phone call from family support staff.

The next CHAMP training will be held on Wednesday, May 8, from 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Please sign up for a one-hour slot on the hour by sending an email to:

[rmccorkle@soshoresupport.org](mailto:rmccorkle@soshoresupport.org)

This is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

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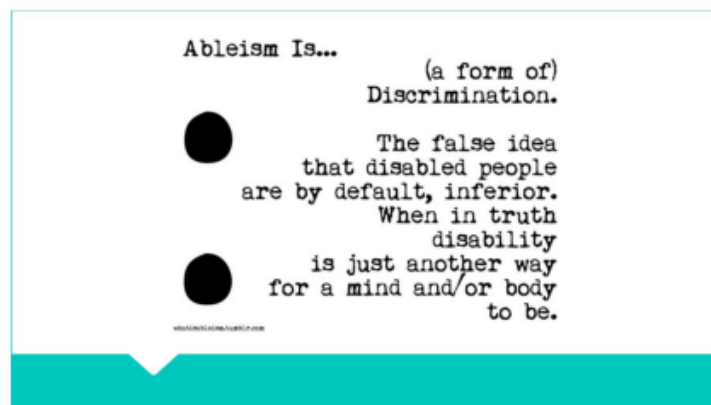
## **Ableism Training With Maureen King Wednesday, April 17, from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm**

Ableism Training  
Wednesday, April 17, 2024  
6:30 PM – 8:00PM in person at Family Support Center  
Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84621323903>

Presenter: Maureen King  
Department of Developmental Services  
South Shore Support Services  
Family Support Center  
435 Columbian Street  
Weymouth, MA 02190

Please join us for a presentation and discussion in understanding Ableism and how it happens, as well as how we can combat Ableism. This session will look at internal and external factors that may contribute to this ongoing form of discrimination.



**Self-Advocacy Series To Be Offered  
To Interested High Schools**

# SELF-ADVOCACY



Our family support center is working with Laurel Hickey and two self-advocates who are trained in the Self-Advocacy Leadership Series. One family support coordinator, Daniella Justinvil and three newly trained self-advocates, Amanda Carbonneau, Declan Finn, and Stacey Ford who will finish this training in April, plan to offer the Self-Advocacy Leadership Series (an 8-week training program) to students in local high schools. If you are interested in our Family Support Center providing the Self-Advocacy Leadership Series in your school, please contact Renee McCorkle at [rmccorkle@soshoresupport.org](mailto:rmccorkle@soshoresupport.org).

## Volunteer Opportunities

We are looking for volunteers who are willing to come to Hingham or Cohasset to share their time and talents with members of our day services programs. Whether one hour a week, twice a month, or even once a month, we are looking to expand learning opportunities by drawing on the skills of our community members. South Shore Support Services' staff will be present at all activities to provide individualized assistance with projects. We are looking for classes in arts, music, movement, crafts, dance, cooking, horticulture, exercise, photography, and any other area of skill you are willing to share.

Additional types of volunteers are needed, and we would be pleased to find a way for any talent to be shared: painters, electricians, landscapers, repairmen, etc. We can find a place for all types of help at South Shore Support Services. If interested, please contact Laurel Hickey at [lhickey@soshoresupport.org](mailto:lhickey@soshoresupport.org), and let us know your talent to share and your geographic preference.

Thanks for reading!

South Shore Support Services  
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Weymouth, MA 02189  
[www.soshoresupport.org](http://www.soshoresupport.org)



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