

DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER



A monthly newsletter by The Autism Program at Boston Medical Center for families and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) & other neurodevelopmental diagnoses

March is Here, Spring is Near!

Happy March - we hope that everyone's month is off to a great start. It has been a long winter, but luckily for us the first day of Spring (March 20th) is not too far away!



Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is also Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM). Here at Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, some might say that every month is DDAM - and I'm sure a lot of our friends and families would also agree! We hope that March can serve as a special reminder for all of us to take care of ourselves, and to share and celebrate all the heart & hard work that is behind our care.

WE'RE HERE ALL YEAR

Did you know DDAM is an annual & national campaign hosted by the National

Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD)? Visit their website for this year's theme & more information:

www.nacdd.org/ddam2025/

Scan this QR code using your phone camera!



Teens Engaged as Mentors (TEAM)



Last month, our TEAM participants enjoyed an adventurous outing to the **LEGO Discovery Center** in Boston! It was a day full of innovation and fun. Building Lego creations, participating in Lego games, and going for a ride on the Lego chariot - not to mention watching some exciting Lego adventures together on the big IMAX screen!



Interested in learning more about TEAM? Contact us at autismprogram@bmc.org.

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Caregiver Resources



3/6 Supporting Siblings (support group & parent training)

5:30pm By UMass Chan Medical School and PPAL

Join this monthly group for caregivers and siblings of youth with ASD, developmental disabilities, and/or mental health concerns, where siblings can meet other children & teens who know what it's like. This event is facilitated by psychiatrists and trainees at UMass Chan Medical School. Caregivers can also separately join a group led by a trained parent mentor or a social worker!

Register for this event by calling (857) 523-1145 or by sending an email to emily.rubin@umassmed.edu.



3/13 Moving Forward Together: Building a Foundation of Support

6pm By PPAL (Parent/Professional Advocacy League)

This workshop is designed for parents and caregivers who are just starting out on their behavioral/mental health journey. The goal is to empower families with skills, knowledge, and resources to drive their child's care, as well as to build capacity to help with relationships and communication with a new group of professionals.

Register for this event by clicking [here](#)!



3/19 Genetics and Autism

6:30pm By the Lurie Center for Autism

Join this presentation to explore the relevance of genetics to autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Susan Kuo, PhD, will discuss genetic variation within the autism community and how genetic insights are driving research discoveries. Susanna Mierau, MD, PhD, a neurologist at the Lurie Center for Autism, will discuss recommendations for genetic testing and how this information can benefit autistic people and their families. Information will also be provided about opportunities to be involved in autism-related genetics research.

Register for this event by clicking [here](#)!



3/21 Everything Families Should Know about the Special Education Process

10am By Children's Trust

Join for an informative session designed to help parents & providers understand and navigate the special education system. Whether you are supporting families with the process, your child is in Early Intervention, struggling in school, or already has an IEP, this session will guide you through what special education offers, how to request an evaluation, and how to collaborate effectively with schools. Participants will also learn how to access valuable resources and other disability services to support children's unique needs.

Register for this event by clicking [here](#)!



Upcoming Sensory-friendly Events in MA

*Sounding
Together: An
Exploration
of Courage,
Caution and
Kindness*

The **Boston Symphony Orchestra** cordially invites you to a sensory-friendly concert on March 22nd, Saturday. This concert will provide a unique experience for listeners to get up, move around, and express themselves freely to the music! Join Thomas Wilkins, the featuring conductor for this concert, in the connection and communication that music can bring forward.



Purchase Tickets

- March 22nd, 2025
- 10 AM & 12 PM
- Boston Symphony Hall



Tickets for 10AM



Tickets for 12PM

Hockey Game in Springfield!

Join the Springfield Thunderbirds in their annual sensory-friendly Sunday & Autism Awareness game on March 16th! They will be playing against the Bruins. A game that is sensory-friendly will feature no goal horn and noise meters, decreased microphone and music volume, consistent lighting with no strobe lights, "cool down stations", and a sensory story booklet as well as other supportive items for viewers.



Purchase discounted tickets (\$17) on their website or by contacting Lauren at (413) 417-2289.



Open Door Theater in Acton is an integrated accessible theater company that provides full scale productions featuring actors who are Deaf, with disabilities, Autistic, neurodiverse, etc. This month from March 21st to 30th, they are presenting The Prom School Edition in a sensory friendly setting! A humorous and eccentric musical about a small town prom - be sure to catch this!

Cooking Together

This month, we hosted another exciting **virtual cooking class** for BMC's DBP patients (between ages 12-22) in collaboration with the BMC Teaching Kitchen. Our class participants gathered together just in time for dinner with Paige Rizzuto (MPS, RDN) from the Teaching Kitchen.

Menu of the day? **Veggie Quesadillas!**



We know that cooking is not easy, especially if you are just beginning to learn. So to break it all down, students received helpful visuals prior to the event containing the ingredients, tools, and steps that are needed to make the dish.

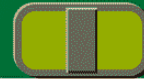
With all the preparations set up, we were ready to get cooking! During the class, Paige guided the group step-by-step through this delicious and versatile recipe. We also learned some important cooking skills about how to read and follow a recipe (see right). It was a night filled with lots of great questions, delicious sights, and smiles! A lot of cooking joy was also spread with many participants cooking for their loved ones.



What did we learn?

How to read a recipe! ☆

- **Before cooking, make sure to read the recipe once and then twice!** Sometimes there are parts of the recipe that you need to prepare in advance.
- **Smart set up is easy cooking:** Check the recipe for the ingredients and equipments that you will need. Then, lay it all out on your counter so that everything is in front of you! This will make the cooking process easier and more straight forward. Fun fact: in French, this is called "mise en place"!



WOW!
Check out
these tasty
creations
from the
class 😊



Make this at home using the simple & healthy recipe from **BMC Teaching Kitchen!** Click the quesadillas or scan the QR code.



To register for our next cooking class, please contact our Transition Specialist:

- katie.campbell@bmc.org
- (617) 414-7947

Special thanks to Paige from the Teaching Kitchen, BMC Transition Specialist Katie Campbell, and all our participants for another wonderful class! For those of you who missed it, no worries - this class will be held every month. Don't hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or to register for our future events! We look forward to cooking together again during our **next class on April 2nd**.

Connect with us!

Cooking is a life skill that many young adults are learning when transitioning to adulthood. **We would love to hear feedback** from individuals about their experiences in learning how to cook, as well as what supports might be helpful in building cooking skills. Please feel free to share your thoughts with us at autismprogram@bmc.org

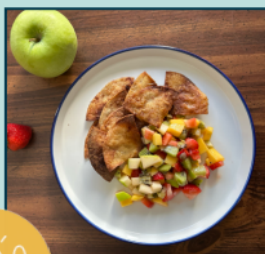


Up next: Fruit Salsa with Cinnamon Sugar Tortilla Chips

Boston Medical Center's Teaching Kitchen presents:

Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics Virtual Cooking Class

Open to all DBP Patients Ages 12-22



- Wednesday, April 2nd**
5-6 pm
- Zoom**
link provided upon registration
- Recipe**
Fruit Salad & Cinnamon Sugar Tortilla Chips
- Skill Focus of the Class**
Knife Skills & Basic Cooking Techniques

Join us to expand your cooking skills and learn a new recipe! No previous cooking experience is required to join.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED:

To register contact BMC DBP's Transition Specialist via email or phone:

katie.campbell@bmc.org

(617) 414-7947

Visual supports for the ingredients, kitchen tools and recipe steps will be provided prior to the class.

Participants are responsible for **purchasing the ingredients** and kitchen tools needed for the class.

Family members are welcome to join their participant during the class to provide support and join in the fun.

Let's get cooking!



BMC Teaching Kitchen



BMC Teaching Kitchen is a dynamic program that offers interactive, patient-focused nutrition education through hands on learning. Visit their website to sign up for free cooking classes, view a library of healthy recipes, and more!

DEVELOPMENT & BEYOND NEWSLETTER

Looking for Legal Support with the Guardianship Paperwork?

If you or your family member are currently going through the process of obtaining guardianship, you should know that **BMC's Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics** is hosting a **Guardianship Clinic on April 17th**! If you are eligible, you can receive support from the Volunteer Lawyer's Project. **Make sure to bring your paperwork as they will be able to provide support for the legal portion of it.** The clinic will be held at The SPARK Center in Mattapan, and you will need to **make an appointment in advance to reserve a slot.**



Guardianship Clinic


For Boston Medical Center's (BMC) Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) patients


BMC DBP is collaborating with the Volunteer Lawyer's Project to host a **FREE guardianship clinic** for eligible families to receive legal support with guardianship paperwork.

ELIGIBILITY

1. DBP patient aged 17+
2. Completed guardianship medical paperwork i.e., Medical Certificate OR Clinical Team Report (CTR)
3. Meet Volunteer Lawyer's Project (VLP) eligibility requirements. Contact BMC Transition Specialist for more info.

EVENT DETAILS

 **The Spark Center**
255 River Street
Mattapan, MA 02126

 **Thursday April 17th, 2025** (appointment time provided at registration)

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

To register contact BMC DBP's Transition Specialist via email or phone:



katie.campbell@bmc.org



(617) 414-7947

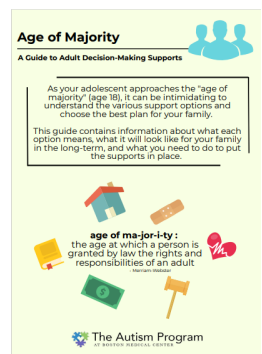
Additional Resources



The Autism Program offers the **Age of Majority Guide** on our website, which has extensive information about

guardianship as well as many other decision making options that are available to folks. We encourage you to check it out as a resource!

► **Age of Majority Guide**



Upcoming Events: Virtual



3/6 Support Group: Gender Identity for Autistic Adults

7:30pm By AANE (Association for Autism and Neurodiversity)

This group is for post-high school Autistic adults who are interested in discussing and exploring their gender in a supportive setting. Most people who attend identify as transgender, nonbinary, and/or genderfluid, and some are questioning their gender identity or gender roles. Join us to share stories and perspectives, and to get support. No autism diagnosis or certainty about gender identity is required to attend. This is a safe place to explore intersecting identities.

Register for this event by clicking [here!](#)

AANE offers financial support for their events - reach out!



3/10 Workshop: Parents as Partners - Supporting Neurodivergence in Adulthood

7pm By AANE (Association for Autism and Neurodiversity)

Presented by parent child team Ilia and Ryan Walsh, this session offers a comprehensive exploration into the dynamics of parenting adult neurodivergent individuals. Drawing from their own experiences, they will provide practical strategies for establishing a collaborative relationship between parents and their adult neurodivergent children. The focus will be on mutual understanding, respect, and the empowerment of neurodivergent adults, with an emphasis on recognizing and leveraging their unique strengths.

Register for this event by clicking [here!](#)



3/13 Support Group: Employment for Adults

7pm By AANE (Association for Autism and Neurodiversity)

This support group is for Autistic adults (18+) who are post k-12. Through this support group, members can connect with a variety of participants on the topic of employment. Whether you're currently working, looking for a job or recuperating from burn out, this group is a chance to receive support, share what works for you and learn from each other, on all things related to employment.

Register for this event by clicking [here!](#)



3/17 Jackbox Game Night for Adults

8pm By AANE (Association for Autism and Neurodiversity)

Join this event for some camaraderie and fun! The group will be playing a variety of Jackbox games that will be selected as a group! Most games fit about 8 participants, but are still a blast to watch. Both games and players will be rotated throughout the night to have a great time together.

Register for this event by clicking [here!](#)



Upcoming Community Events

2025 VISIONS OF COMMUNITY VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

MARCH 8, 2025



WHERE
YOU
MATTER

Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) is hosting their annual [Visions of Community virtual conference](#) on March 8th! This will be an opportunity to bring together parents, caregivers, and professionals for live workshops and meaningful connections.



2025 Keynote Speakers



Jules Edwards is an Anishinaabe writer, gardener, accountant, and disability justice advocate. She is a neurodivergent parent of neurodivergent children. Experiencing disability through multiple lenses has helped her

to help others. She writes as “Autistic, Typing” on her website & social media. Her first book, *I Will Die On This Hill: Autistic Adults, Autism Parents, and the Children Who Deserve a Better World*, was co-written with Meghan Ashburn.



Dr. Myisha R. Rodrigues, executive leader and licensed mental health counselor, is a Black, cis-woman Doctor of Counseling and Psychology with a concentration in Transformative Leadership, Education, and Applied Research. Dr. Rodrigues uses DEIB and healing-centered engagement in her work connecting theory to practice and

building systems in adult & adolescent socio-emotional learning and clinical mental health counseling. She is a faculty member in Lesley University’s Counseling & Psychology Department and has 20 years of experience in the mental health and education sectors.



FCSN is also hosting [Youth Visions of Community, Journey to Self-Discovery](#). This in-person & free event is for transition aged youth (14-16), their families, and the professionals who support them. This will be an opportunity for youth to work with FCSN Youth Advisory Board Members & staff to imagine the future they want for themselves. Families and professionals will also connect with FCSN staff to explore transition planning process and more. Both groups will leave their sessions with concrete strategies and tools. Don't miss this event!



Resources



The Autism Program is continues to support families in many ways both inside and outside of Boston Medical Center. Check out our website to learn more about the services, supports and programs we offer including our Autism Friendly Hospital Initiative, Teens Engaged as Mentors (TEAM) program, and our training offerings. We also have a huge resource library where you can access free information on a variety of topics such as safety, behavioral support, transition to adulthood, insurance and more!



www.bmc.org/autism
Autismprogram@bmc.org



The Autism Program



@BMCAutismProgram

Clinic

Our DBP clinicians are available for developmental evaluations, assessments and follow up. To connect with the clinical team, please call 617-414-4841 and follow the prompts for Developmental Pediatrics.



Our Clinicians

Marilyn Augustyn, MD

Arathi Reddy, DO

Rachel Amgott, NP

Christina Lazdowsky, NP

Mei Elansary, MD

Audrey Christiansen, MD

Sarah Canale, MD

Mary Ellen Killion, NP

Arielle Spellun, MD

Bridget Poznanski, PhD

Rachel Vuolo, MD

Selcen YarogluKazanci, MD

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Development and Beyond is brought to you by the Autism Program at Boston Medical Center, a family support program of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics. **To join our mailing list for future newsletters, community resources and more, scan the QR code to the right!**



Do you have an idea for a future newsletter?

Email us at

autismprogram@bmc.org

with your suggestions!