



## The Parent Leadership Project's *Parent Perspective*

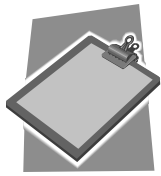
(877) 35-EI-PLP ♦ [www.eiplp.org](http://www.eiplp.org) ♦ [eiplp@yahoo.com](mailto:eiplp@yahoo.com)

Early Intervention Information and Resources

April/May 2007

*Parent-to-Parent: Building Connections*

**Family Voices Matter — Tell Us What You Think**



**F**amilies — the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division for Perinatal, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs (DPECSHN) wants to hear from you!

Think about the supports and services that your family currently receives. Right now, do you have any unmet or under-met health needs? Are the services and supports you receive delivered in a family-centered and accessible way?

To ensure that DPECSHN policies and programs meet your needs, are comprehensive, culturally competent and family friendly, we partner with families asking for involvement and input. The information you share informs on-going planning and is used to update our annual Maternal and Child Health Block Grant application and to develop our Chapter 171 Family Support Plan. The Maternal and Child Health Bureau Block Grant is federal funding for programs for women, children, and families, including children with special health needs.

In 2002, the Massachusetts Legislature passed Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2002, "An Act Providing Support to Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families." This legislation requires the Department of Public Health each year to develop a plan, based on substantial consultation from families, that explains how DPH will deliver services and supports that are flexible and family-directed.

DPECSHN gathers information from families in a number of ways, including regional meetings, workshops at conferences, telephone interviews and email surveys. A questionnaire is available on the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project website at [www.eiplp.org](http://www.eiplp.org). This can be filled out and emailed, mailed or faxed to the Department of Public Health. Please take a moment to tell us what's working and where we can do better, so that we can continue to provide children and families with the best possible programs.

### *Opportunity Knocks*

**MEIC Conference Celebrates "Changing Families, Changing Times" — May 9&10**

**P**arents, providers and Early Intervention staff are invited to attend the 28th Annual Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference being held on May 9 and 10 at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough. Celebrating "Changing Families, Changing Times", the conference will offer two days of learning as well as the opportunity for parents to meet other families of children in Early Intervention.

Parent Contacts for Early Intervention programs throughout the state are invited to attend this fun and educational conference free of charge. The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, through generous funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, will cover the conference registration fee and overnight accommodations (double occupancy). Conference registration includes daily continental breakfasts and lunch. On Wednesday evening, the Parent Leadership Project will also host a Parent Networking Dinner that is free to all parents who attend the conference. (Please check the Parent Dinner box at the top of the registration form or call the Parent Leadership Project.) This dinner is an excellent opportunity to meet and share experiences with other families of children in Early Intervention and to learn more about parent leadership.

Attending the MEIC conference is a wonderful way to learn more about early childhood topics as well as to meet other parents and Early Intervention providers. This year's conference offers parents a variety of workshops, exhibits and networking opportunities.

Workshops for this year's conference include:

*Parent Leadership: Finding Your Way, Helping Children with Sensory Processing Disorders: Simple Strategies for Clinicians and Parents, Turning Three, Basic Rights, Managing the Maze: Benefits and Programs that Really Matter, Sign Language for Infants and Young Children* and many others.

For more information about the conference and registration information, please contact the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project at 1-877-353-4757.



## Resources

### Consumer Empowerment Funds Program



Many organizations, both in Massachusetts and other states, offer conferences and workshops to families. Attending these conferences is a great way to learn more about your child's particular diagnosis, to network with other families, and develop leadership skills. Unfortunately, these events

may also require registration or other fees, making it difficult for some families to attend.

The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council provides funds for individuals with developmental disabilities and/or a family member or guardian to attend conferences or other events in Massachusetts or another state. The goal of this pro-

gram is to promote the empowerment of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by assisting them in their efforts to achieve independence, productivity, integration and inclusion.

An application must be made before the event, and successful applicants are eligible to receive up to \$500 to help defray the cost of conference-related expenses. Eligible expenses include transportation, registration, childcare, accommodations and meals. Please note that families may only apply once per year for these funds.

The application, eligibility criteria, definition of developmental disabilities, program guidelines and additional information is available at [www.mass.gov/mddc/cefp/index.htm](http://www.mass.gov/mddc/cefp/index.htm) or by calling 617-770-7676 ext. 115.

### National Family Caregivers Association

Parents of children in Early Intervention are often busy with the necessary tasks of caring for their young children. They may have many therapy appointments, frequent doctor visits and more paperwork than they ever imagined! With so many things to do, parents may not make the time to take care of themselves and to recognize the important work they do in caring for their children. The National Family Caregivers Association offers families resources and information about finding a balance and learning to meet the needs of everyone in the family — including yourself.

The National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA) is a non-profit organization that supports, empowers and speaks up for the more than 50 million Americans who care for loved ones with a chronic illness or disability. NFCA reaches across the boundaries of diagnoses, relationships and life stages to address the common needs and concerns of all family caregivers.

The NFCA encourages family members to:

- ◆ Believe In Yourself
- ◆ Protect Your Health
- ◆ Reach Out for Help
- ◆ Speak Up for Your Rights

Membership in the National Family Caregivers Association is free to all family caregivers. Membership includes a Caregiver Welcome Kit, which contains brochures on taking care of yourself, talking with health care providers and other topics of interest. The free membership also includes the quarterly newsletter *Take Care!*.

More information about the National Family Caregivers Association, including membership requests, is available on their website at [www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org).

### ICE — In Case of Emergency

Did you know that it's a good idea to put ICE in your cell phone? Or that ICE could save your life? In this case, ICE stands for "In Case of Emergency" and has become an important tool for emergency personnel to both identify a person and have a rapid way of contacting a friend or family member to get more information.

To list an ICE number in your phone, simply add a new contact with the label "ICE". In the event of an emergency where you are unable to speak, emergency responders will be able to scroll through your contacts, locate the ICE number and contact your designated family



member or friend. A few key points to remember when programming ICE into your phone:

- Make sure the person whose name and number you are using has agreed to be your contact.
- Be sure that your ICE contact person knows any important medical information that could affect your emergency care (allergies, medication, etc.)
- Be sure to use a number where someone is likely to answer. A home phone for someone who works full-time outside the home may not be the best choice.

**Taking Good Care...****Foster Parenting:  
Making a Difference in the Life of a Child**

**M**egan Hall is a familiar face for many of the staff at Criterion Middlesex Early Intervention Program. Over the last five years, she has cared for thirteen infants, most of whom have received Early Intervention services for various needs. Megan is a foster parent, one of the many parents throughout the state who open their homes to children in need. She is currently the Foster Parent Ambassador for the Framingham Department of Social Services (DSS) Office, and she shares her experiences to encourage other families to consider foster parenting.

Megan and her family, including three biological daughters, have been caring for foster children for five years. Their first placement was a 9 week old baby boy, whom they later adopted into their family. The family has continued to foster infants, many of whom are placed directly from the hospital. Megan feels a special affection for the babies, and she has compassion for the challenges many of them face. Many of the babies she has cared for have had prenatal substance exposure, some have medical needs, and others have different challenges. “The babies have an amazing resilience,” Megan says. “All of the babies we’ve had have been evaluated for Early Intervention and qualified based on various needs. Early Intervention has made a big difference in their lives.” She also credits Criterion Middlesex with helping her to grow as a parent, both with her son and with the other babies she has cared for since then. “Our son was born drug-addicted and then had some sensory issues. He was enrolled in Early Intervention. The sensory issues were not something we understood at all, but the Early Intervention therapists were very helpful and positive.” As she has continued to care for infants facing some developmental challenges, Megan has found support at the Early Intervention program: “I feel very comfortable asking questions and learning about the babies’ various issues.”



As a foster parent caring for infants, Megan receives support from both Early Intervention and DSS. “Both EI and DSS have been very helpful. The combination of services has been beneficial for the children and for our family.” DSS offers continuing education for foster families, including support groups for foster parents and training on topics of special interest. The support groups can help with what Megan calls the “hardest part” of being a foster parent — saying goodbye. Babies have been in her home for as little as four days, and as long as 18 months. Because foster care is meant to be a temporary living situation and the goal and mandate of DSS is to reunify children with their birth parents, Megan and her family have lots of experience saying goodbye to the babies in their care. The parent-to-parent support group has helped with that, as has Early Intervention. “Early Intervention is already connected to the child and respectful of the needs of that child in their new placement, either with the adoptive or biological parents. The whole family — foster, adoptive and biological — benefits from EI.”

Megan has stayed in touch with many of the children she has cared for over the last years. She has enjoyed seeing their progress, and while she admits that continuing contact may not work for all families, “in our circumstances, it has worked for us.”

There are 29 Foster Parent Ambassadors like Megan, one for each DSS area office in the state. The ambassadors are all experienced foster parents who are able to do grassroots recruitment in their own communities. They also provide support to potential foster families by sharing their personal stories. The Ambassadors are available to address the questions and concerns a prospective foster family may have.

**You Can Make A Difference in the Life of a Child**

**T**here is an urgent need for foster families for children of all ages and in all Massachusetts communities. Currently, 10,000 children are in the custody of the Department of Social Services and approximately 8000 of them are in foster care. Foster families are needed for infants, teens, sibling groups and children with special medical and learning needs. The greatest need is for foster families who can make a commitment to a child for a period of time. There are other opportunities to make a difference, including: emergency hotline foster care, short-term care, and respite care for other foster parents.

Who can be a foster parent? In Massachusetts, a foster parent must be 18 years of age or older. They may be with or without children, and can be either at home or working outside the home. They may be single, married, partnered, gay or lesbian. A foster parent should be able to care for, nurture and provide

emotional support to a child. Foster parents need empathy, listening and communication skills, a willingness to partner with DSS and other community agencies, advocacy skills and a knowledge of community resources, and a sense of humor.

DSS provides support to foster parents in a variety of ways. Foster families receive a stipend to cover a child’s expenses, and children in foster care receive MassHealth to cover their medical expenses. Ongoing training and support groups are available to families, as well as respite care when needed. Each foster family has a Family Resource Social Worker and each foster child has social worker.

If you would like more information about becoming a foster parent, please call the Adoption and Foster Care Line at 1-800-KIDS-508 or visit [www.dsskids.org](http://www.dsskids.org).

## Sibshops

On March 3, Thom Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP), in collaboration with All Out Adventures, sponsored a Sibshop at Mt. Tom Reservation in Holyoke for siblings of children who are or were enrolled in the WRCP. The Regional Consultation Program, in consultation with Early Intervention, other community providers and families, works to meet the developmental needs of children who have complex care requirements, multiple disabilities and/or extensive medical health care needs.

Siblings of these children often have to cope with a variety of challenges, including spending time away from parents while their brother or sister is hospitalized and dealing with the day-to-day challenges of having a sibling with complex needs. Sibshops offers the siblings a day to relax, have fun and talk about their experiences. Several of the parents and children were willing to share their experiences:

*I just wanted to tell you what a GREAT time Michael had on Saturday! He was so excited when we picked him up. He loved the snowshoeing and hiking! He was a non-stop chatter-box when he got in the car. We haven't seen him like that in a LONG time, and it was wonderful! Truly a special day just for him. ~ Parent comment*

*I thought that the Sibshop was great. I had a blast. It was my first time going to a Sibshop. We did some pretty cool activities. First, we drew on a paper plate on how we woke up that*

*morning. Then we introduced ourselves to everyone. After that we went on the patio and played the "I never" game. I liked that one; it's when you say what you have never done, and if someone has already done it they try next to get someone else. Then we went on a nature scavenger hunt. After lunch, we wrote on the word wall. It said:*

*"When I think of my sibling, I . . . " Then you wrote what you think of your brother or sister. After this came the exciting and new part for me — we went snowshoeing! I really hope that I get to go to another Sibshop." ~ Kiara*

*The scavenger hunt was extremely fun. You had to go find all types of things, including animals! At one time, my group had to look for feathers, and while looking we fell down a hill! I loved doing the push-sled and the snowshoeing because they were so much fun. On the word wall, I wrote "When I think of my sister, I think about baby dolls" because she always likes to play dolls with me." ~ Kaitlin*

*I love Sibshops because I get to do a lot of fun things. I liked hiking and snowshoeing. On the word wall, I wrote "funny" because my sister is always doing silly things that make me laugh. ~ Thomas*



## Family TIES of Massachusetts: Together in Enhancing Support

Family TIES of Massachusetts is a network for parents of children with special needs. As parents of children with special needs, we realize that the most powerful source of support is other parents. Sharing information provides family members with knowledge and skills that help to improve our children's opportunities.

The Federation's annual conference presents Family TIES with two great opportunities. First, we are able to meet many of the parents who have called us for assistance and support during the previous 12 months. This is a pleasure, as most of our work is done by phone and email. Through this personal interaction, we are able to complete the "picture" we have of your family – sometimes literally, as parents often share photos of the children for whom we have been seeking supports and services. This is a thrill for us!

The second event that takes place at the conference is distribution of the latest edition of our Directory of Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs. This year we produced our 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Directory. Because of the ever

expanding number of listings that are in the directory, we have made some dramatic changes to the format of its contents. The five sections offer (1) expanded listings by topic, (2) an alphabetic listing of all programs, (3) information about Early Intervention services with reference to our website for the most up-to-date contact information, (4) a growing number of state agencies and programs, and (5) resources for Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities. We look forward to feedback from you, the users of our Directory. To receive a copy, contact your local Family TIES Regional Coordinator or call our toll-free line, 800-905-TIES (8437). The content is also available on our website: [www.massfamilyties.org](http://www.massfamilyties.org).

### Workshop Updates:

**Family TIES of Massachusetts offers free skill-building workshops to parents, including "Let's Get Organized", and "Listening and Learning: Support Parent Training". If you would like to attend a workshop in your area contact your Family TIES Regional Coordinator or call 1-800-905-TIES.**

## Workshops and Conferences

**Listening and Learning (Support Parent Training)**— April 11 at FLLAC in Fitchburg. Participants will share their personal experiences and develop their listening skills as they prepare to become Support Parents for Family TIES Parent to Parent program. Contact 1-800-905-TIES for more information.

**Let's Get Organized** — April 28 at Clarke School in Northampton. This free workshop will help families develop their own record keeping system for the information they collect about their child. Family TIES will also be presenting this workshop at various locations throughout the state this spring. For more information, please contact 1-800-905-TIES.

**The Challenging Child** — May 1 from 5:30 to 8:30 at Rom's Restaurant in Sturbridge. Co-sponsored by Child Care Connection, Criterion Central Regional Consultation Program and Thom Western Regional Consultation program, this dinner and discussion workshop will help parents to understand, work with and enjoy their children. The training is free to family members of children enrolled in RCP. For more information or to register, please contact Karen Cassidy at 783-5500 ext. 16.

**Turning Three** — May 2 from 12:30 to 2pm at South Shore Mental Health, 500 Victory Rd., Quincy. This workshop highlights the differences between Early Intervention and publicly funded preschool for children with special needs. Discussion includes eligibility for special education, the Team process for decision making and the parent's role in the transition process. The event is FREE to parents and professionals. To register, please contact Kathy Haran-Kovacs at 617-774-1048.

**Family Support Festival** — May 2 from 1 to 7pm at the Best Western Sovereign Hotel and Conference Center in West Springfield. This free resource fair will offer information about state and other resources that support children with disabilities and their families. Several mini-sessions will occur on topics including Autism, Emergency Preparedness, Guardianship and Public Benefits. For more information contact Mary at 413-284-5055.

**TrachCare "Spring Fling"** — May 5 from 10:30am to 2pm at The Professional Center for Child Development, 32 Osgood St. Andover. TrachCare provides support and information to parents and caregivers of children who have or previously had a tracheostomy and children who are on ventilator support. The Spring Fling will feature activities and crafts for children, and an opportunity to connect with families and meet trach supplies vendors. Lunch is provided. For more information, please call 617-527-1990 or email [info@theprofessionalcenter.org](mailto:info@theprofessionalcenter.org)

**Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference** — May 9-10 at the Best Western Royal Plaza and Hotel in Marlborough. This conference brings together Early Intervention staff, early childhood providers and families of children who are receiving Early Intervention services to learn about child development and the Early Intervention system.

For more information, contact the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project at 1-877-353-4757.

**Basic Rights** — May 15 from 6:30 to 8:30pm at Shriner's Hospital Auditorium in Springfield. This free workshop provides families with an introduction to their rights and responsibilities under state and federal special education laws. Parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, learn about eligibility, and how to make decisions and monitor their child's educational progress. For more information or to register, please contact Karen Cassidy at 413-783-5500.

**Developing a "Family Friendly" Lifestyle** — May 17 from 7 to 8:30pm at the Professional Center for Child Development in Andover. Learn about the issues challenging families and positive parenting techniques. Contact Ellen at 978-475-3806 ext. 217 for more information.

**Statewide Family Skating Party** — June 9 from 5:30 to 7:30pm at Roll On America in Leominster. This is a free family fun event sponsored by the Regional Consultation Programs (RCP) of Massachusetts. All families who are involved with RCP programs are invited to attend. Skate rental and refreshments are included. Strollers and wheelchairs will be allowed on the skating area. For more information, please contact Karen Cassidy at 413-783-5500.

**24th Annual New England  
Regional Seminar  
For Children with Visual Impairments and  
their Families**

*Taking Care of Our Children . .  
Taking Care of Ourselves*



When: Saturday, April 28  
8:30am—3:00pm

Where: Perkins School for the Blind  
175 North Beacon St.  
Watertown MA

This is a New England wide opportunity for parents of children with visual impairments or deafblindness to attend informational workshops and to network with other families of children with similar conditions. Sessions will include information on such topics as communication, pre-Braille, feeding issues, literacy and a teen panel. Childcare and lunch are provided. Contact Tom Miller for additional information at [PreschoolProgam@Perkins.org](mailto:PreschoolProgam@Perkins.org)

## WORKING TOGETHER

### WESTERN REGION

The **Pediatric Development Center (PDC)** is offering a free training for individuals interested in working in our Specialty Service Provider Program with young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This training is open to anyone with an interest and/or experience working with young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder as well as parents who might be interested in learning more about the opportunities available within our community for children and families. The eight-hour training will be held in two four hour sessions at PDC in Pittsfield on Wednesday, May 16 and May 23 from 3:30-7:30pm. If you are interested in this training, please contact Kim at 413-499-4537 x120.

The **PDC** in Pittsfield would like to express sincere thanks to Robin Pearce, our Parent Contact, for serving in that capacity for the past three years. Robin has been a wonderful parent contact for our program, even as busy as she is with her own work and family. The PDC appreciates and values her open and honest feedback and her gift for flexibility! Thank you, Robin, for all you've given to PDC and PDC families over the years – it is so appreciated!

**Thom Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP)** has a busy calendar of events being offered this spring. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, WRCP will host the Annual Parent/Caregiver Dinner at the Hu Ke Lau restaurant in Chicopee. This is an excellent opportunity to network with other families. The program is also hosting several trainings, including Beginning Sign Language Classes, The Challenging Child, Basic Rights Workshop and An IEP for My Child. All events are free to families. For more information about these and other events, please call 413-783-5500.

**REACH Early Intervention Program** received a CVS Pharmacy grant to sponsor a series of workshops for families with young children with autism called Transition Discussion and Training: Focus on Advocacy, Support and Education. The workshops are held bi-weekly in the evenings and run through May. Child care and light supper are provided. Topics addressed have included: "Community Outings: Tips for Success", Matthew Engel from the Disability Law Center on Special Education Law, and "Transition and Parent Rights". Upcoming workshops include "Raising a Child with Special Needs: How to Become a Resilient Family", "Enhancing Supports", and "The Personal Journey: a Parent Panel Shares Their Stories and Wisdom" and several others.

### BOSTON REGION

Staff and families at **Thom Boston Metro Early Intervention** in Jamaica Plain welcome occupational therapist Susanna Fencsik and developmental specialist Sarah Partridge to their program. Both are looking forward to working with children and families in the EI program.

Frustrated with the parking situation in the area, **Thom Boston Metro Early Intervention's** Speech and Language Pathologist,

Sharon Saklad, drafted a letter to the City of Boston explaining the services she provides for the children and families of Boston. Her initiative resulted in a meeting with the Boston Transportation Department and an invitation to join a collaboration of home visiting agencies that will be able to apply for special parking permits beginning in March 2007. These permits will allow home visitors to short-term park in residential areas without the risk of tickets or towing. Sharon's efforts will help service delivery for many families throughout the city of Boston.

Dr. Wanessa Risko, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital Boston, has been a regular guest speaker in parent groups at the **Children's Community Early Intervention Program**. The topics which Dr. Risko has discussed with parents have included summer safety, feeding and nutrition for infants and toddlers, supporting separation, toddlers and tantrums, and managing parental stress. The topics were all chosen by the EI parents involved, and the discussions have been very open and participatory.

### SOUTHEAST REGION

The **Cape & Islands Early Childhood Intervention Program (Cape & Islands EI)** has recently made an investment in training to increase skills and resources in meeting the needs of children with significant feeding issues. The Southeast Regional Consultation Program supported consultants from the South East Center for Swallowing and Communication Disorders, Inc. to provide a series of three trainings and observations. In coordination with this, two of the staff, an OT and SLP who actively participated in the trainings, have started a feeding group with the focus on parent education and support. The group has had three meetings so far, and staff and parents are thrilled with the changes that are already being seen and the new confidence expressed by parents.

**Cape & Islands** has also been the recipient of a small local grant to continue to support a weekly parent support and child group for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders or similar social and communication concerns. The grant allows for an additional staff person for the child group and covers costs associated with the parent support group, including speakers and food. This group, originally scheduled to run for 10 weeks, has been ongoing for over a year due to the overwhelming parent feedback on its benefit for children and families, including the brothers and sisters who attend with their siblings enrolled in EI.

The **Kennedy Donovan Center Early Intervention Program in New Bedford (KDC New Bedford)** has received generous funding of a grant by St. Paul Travelers Insurance Co. The funding will allow the program to increase its group services, adding an additional parent/child group on Mondays beginning March 26. The program will also add a parent group to the existing Thursday child group. KDC New Bedford is excited to be able to offer these services to families looking for group activities for their children.

## FAMILY & EI PROGRAM COLLABORATION

**South Bay Early Intervention Brockton (South Bay-Brockton)** in collaboration with the North River Collaborative will be hosting a Community Resource Fair at Rockland Place on April 25 from 11-1pm and 6-8pm. Representatives from many agencies including Head Start, Public Schools and WIC will be there to speak about resources that are available to families. There will be door prizes and activities for the children.

**South Bay-Brockton** in collaboration with the Brockton ARC and Growthways is hosting a Sibshop on April 18 at the Old Colony YMCA in Brockton. This group is open to siblings of children with special needs. For more information on the Sibshop program or to refer a sibling, please contact Rachel Johnson at 508-559-0473 ext. 743.

### CENTRAL REGION

**Kennedy Donovan South Central Early Intervention Program (KDC South Central)** will be participating in several spring community events. On March 31, the program will participate in Healthy Kids Day at the Tri-Community Y in Southbridge from 10am-2pm. The "Make It and Take It" Fair, hosted by Southbridge Early Childhood, will be held on April 28 at the West St. School in Southbridge. In addition, the program will be holding a Spring Transition night on May 10<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8pm at 176 Main St. in Southbridge. Transition Night is designed for families whose child is turning three between July 1 and December 31, 2007. Child care will be provided. For more information, please call 508-765-0292.

The Preschool Enrichment Program at **KDC South Central** is now accepting applications for fall enrollment. This early intervention and private preschool program works with children ages 2.9 to 5 and is available one, two or three afternoons a week. Contact Lauren Boisvert at 508-765-0292 for more information.

The **KDC South Central** program is offering an additional scholarship for a parent from the program to attend the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference on May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Robin Weber at 508-765-0292 for more information.

On Tuesday, February 27, the **Criterion-Middlesex Early Intervention Program** in Framingham hosted a "Winter Fun Day" for families in the program. The event was well-attended and was a wonderful opportunity for parents to meet other families in Early Intervention. Activities included a Discovery Toys raffle, sensory activities, gross motor obstacle courses, cookie painting, arts and crafts, and goodie bags to take home. A fun time was had by all!

**Criterion-Valley Early Intervention** in Milford is planning a family fun day on March 27. Extended families are welcome to join us at the Center for a Spring Fling. Activities will include decorating cookies, making play-dough creations, singing and dancing and snacktime. Everyone will go home with a

"goody bag." We hope that family members and friends will come and have a good day.

The **Thom Marlborough Early Intervention Program (Marlborough EIP)** has joined with Adoptive Families Together to offer a "coffee and conversation" group for adoptive, foster, guardian and kinship parents. The group is co-facilitated by adoptive parents and offers an informal atmosphere for sharing support, resources and time to come together as parents of non-traditional families. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 9:30-11am at the Marlborough Boys and Girls Club with space kindly provided by the Assabet Valley Area Family Network. Childcare is available on request. For more information, please contact Margaret Johnson Curran at 508-624-0304 ext. 161.

**Marlborough EIP** is also participating in the 2007 Family Fun and Resource Fair with the Community Partnerships for Children and the Assabet Valley Family Network. This free event is being offered to families with children from birth to 5 years of age in the Metrowest Area on Saturday, April 28 from 9:30-12:30 at the Hildreth School in Marlboro. Entertainment for children will include musicians, storytellers, local children's authors, face painters and much more. For more information, please contact Nancy Phillips at 508-624-0304 ext. 100 or email at NPhillips@thomchild.org.

### NORTHEAST REGION

**Criterion-Stoneham Early Intervention Program (Criterion-Stoneham EIP)** recently hosted free discussions on Potty Training and Discipline. The Center's Turning Three and Let's Get Organized workshops held in March were very well attended. Upcoming free events at Criterion-Stoneham EIP include a Sensory Integration Discussion on May 1st at 1pm, a discussion on Nutrition on May 22nd at 1pm, and a Summertime Fun Discussion on June 12th at 1pm. For registration and childcare information, please call 781-935-3855. Criterion-Stoneham's Parent Advisory Council (PAC) welcomes its new Parent Contacts: Amy Caggiano and Christine Strack.

The **Professional Center for Child Development (PCCD)** is offering a variety of workshops this spring. Turning Three, a workshop to assist families in understanding the transition process, will be held on April 3 from 7-9pm. Developing a "Family Friendly" Lifestyle will be held on May 17 from 7-8:30pm. An IEP Workshop will be held June 5 from 7-9pm. For more information or to register please contact Ellen at 978-475-3806 ext. 217. PCCD has also developed "The Lunch Bunch", a sensory-based nutrition, feeding and social group for children working on sensory and feeding concerns.



## THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Parent Leadership Project was created to support parents whose children receive early intervention services. The Project's main goal is to promote lifetime advocacy, leadership skills and the development of an informed parent constituency, which will encourage early intervention services to be increasingly family centered. 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 communications coordinator, an EI Focused Monitoring Parent Coordinator, Collaboration and Outreach Coordinator and a Training Coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

### STATEWIDE DIRECTOR

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### COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR

### TRAINING COORDINATOR

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## The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project NEWS

### *Parent Participation Opportunity* **ICC is Looking for Parents!**

The Massachusetts Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) is a statewide advisory group that advises and assists the Department of Public Health on Early Intervention issues. Parents are encouraged to be active participants on the council.

There are a variety of ways for parents to get involved with the ICC. Parents are encouraged to join one of the six Standing Committees (Fiscal, Program Planning, Specialty Services, Standards, Membership, Personnel) that meet monthly at various locations throughout the state. Stipends are available for parents who attend meetings on a regular basis.

If you are interested in learning more about the ICC, come and observe an ICC meeting or Committee meeting. For more information on dates and locations, please contact Darla at the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project at 1-877-353-4757 or e-mail [eiplp@yahoo.com](mailto:eiplp@yahoo.com)

**To receive the *Parent Perspective Newsletter*, a free publication, published six times a year by the Parent Leadership Project, call us toll-free at (877) 353-4757 and ask to be added to the PLP mailing list or email [eiplp@yahoo.com](mailto:eiplp@yahoo.com)**

**NEXT DEADLINE:** We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles. The next deadline is **May 14**. Please call our toll-free number (877) 353-4757 or the email the newsletter editor at [Brenda.Allair@state.ma.us](mailto:Brenda.Allair@state.ma.us).

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