



Central Regional Support Groups

Support groups come in many sizes and forms, and their primary goal is the same. That goal is to provide comfort and/or assistance through the gathering of two or more individuals with a common concern. Support groups vary in their approach to fulfilling this goal. Some support groups strive to assist through education by hosting speakers on various issues. Others strive to provide comfort through the sharing of mutual experiences. It is important to find a support group that meets your specific needs. Keep in mind that just like a good pair of jeans, it may take several tries before you find a good fit. Once you find the right fit, a support group can become a comfortable and indispensable resource.

The support groups listed below are just a sampling of the groups available in the area. If you would like more information about a support group listed here, please call the specific support group contact. Groups do change, so we suggest that you call and confirm the meeting time and place before attending a meeting.

To update or add a new support group to this Regional Support Group list, please call Barbara Donati, Family TIES Central Regional Coordinator, at 508-792-7880, Ext. 2337 or 800-905-TIES (8437). THANK YOU!



CENTRAL REGION HAPPENINGS.....www.communitygateway.org

Monthly support, informational & educational meetings in Central Mass.

ADOPTION-ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Adoption Journeys

Post Adoption Support Services for adoptive parents, children, and adolescents in Western Massachusetts. Support groups are held in Florence, Worcester, Needham, Merrimack Valley, and Fall River. Please call for more information.

CONTACT: 413-320-4680 at the Florence, MA number

EMAIL: lmintz@cfservices.org

Adoption Journeys can also be found Statewide call: 1 (800) 972-2734

Adoptive Families Together Worcester: Offers parent-run confidential groups for education, advocacy, support, and more. We also welcome adopted individuals, birth parents, foster parents and all those with a connection to adoption. Meetings are held monthly on the 3rd Thursday from 7-9PM at Worcester MSPCC Office, 335 Chandler Street in the Nu Café Conference Room. Call for more details.

CONTACT: Lori Baeumler, (857) 728-2157 or Ashley Pepoli, (617) 587-1554**E-MAIL:**

lbaeumler@mspcc.org or aepoli@mspcc.org

WEBSITE: www.mspcc.org/aft

KINnections Program/MSPCC: The KINnections Program connects grandparents raising grandchildren and kinship families to resources, information & activities in their community that support and strengthen families. The program provides support groups, trainings and workshops, information assistance, family focused activities/events and respite care support.

CONTACT: Deanna Forist or Lori Baeumler at KINnections/MSPCC, 617-983-5800

E-MAIL: lbaeumler@mspcc.org

WEBSITE: www.mspcc.org

ADVOCACY

Self-Advocacy Support Group: A support group for individuals ages 16 and older who are interested in understanding the rights and responsibilities of using your Voice. This group meets monthly on the 2nd Wednesday from 5-6:30PM at the ARC of North Central Mass. Call for more information.

CONTACT: Madeline Merchant, 978-343-6662, Ext 1011

E-MAIL: m.merchant@arcofopportunity.org

WEBSITE: <http://www.arcofopportunity.org/programs/family-support/self-advocacy>

ASTHMA & ALLERGIES

Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America, New England Chapter: Metro-Boston Area support group meetings, educational programs and events are run by AAFA New England and held at various sites, including Newton-Wellesley Hospital, 2000 Washington Street, Newton. Sign up for e-mail announcements, check the website schedule, or call for dates and topics.

CONTACT: AAFA New England - 781-444-7778

E-MAIL: aafane@aafane.org

WEBSITE: www.asthmaandallergies.org

Pioneer Valley Asthma & Allergy Educational Support Group: Meets periodically at St. John the Baptist Pastoral Center, 200 Groton Road, Ayer and in Ludlow, MA. The group is sometimes inactive so please call for more details.

CONTACT: Nicole Sweeney, Lucy Saloio, or Lisa Holloway, 781-444-7778

E-MAIL: aafane@aafane.org

WEBSITE: www.asthmaandallergies.org

ASPERGER SYNDROME

Parents of Children of Higher Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Meets monthly usually on the 2nd Wednesday from 7-9PM at the Autism Resource Center of Central Massachusetts, 71 Sterling Street, West Boylston. Call for information.

CONTACT: Sue Loring, 508-835-4278

E-MAIL: autism@hmea.org

WEBSITE: <http://www.autismresourcecentral.org/what-we-offer/support-groups/>

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS/PDD

Autism Resource Center, West Boylston: Offers many programs, including Support Groups, sensory integration activities, social skills groups, IEP, ADL & Visual Clinics as well as swim and safety programs, and family fun activities. Call for details.

CONTACT: Sue Loring, 508-835-4278

E-MAIL: autism@HMEA.org

WEBSITE: www.autismresourcecentral.org/

Autism Support Group meets monthly on the 2nd Wednesday from 7–9PM.

Me Time for Lil' Sibs: Me Time for Lil' Sibs is a six-week program designed to increase the understanding of autism for four, five, and six-year-old typically-developing siblings of children on the autism spectrum. Each of the classes will zero in on a different autism-related theme, presented to the kids in a manner they will both comprehend and enjoy. This will be accomplished through a mix of music, social stories, casual discussion, artwork, and a snack-time at class's end, providing both the kids and their parents a chance to bond further. The group will culminate in the kids creating their own illustrated social story with assistance. This is a Parent-Child activity; the 6-week series is offered periodically.

Parent Night Out meets one Friday a month at a local restaurant to network with others in a relaxed environment.

Parents & Tots is designed for parents who have children in preschool or early intervention programs and want to meet other parents of kids on the spectrum. The kids and siblings are part of the group and activities for the kids are planned, such as shave cream painting, snack, and some physical play. Weather permitting this group can also plan to visit a playground or commercial play area, siblings are welcome! Cid DeLeo facilitates this funfest! Meets monthly on the 2nd Monday from 4:30-6PM.

Parents of Children on the Spectrum meet one morning a month from 7-9PM and is a place where parents who are struggling with profound autism's challenges can find ideas, support and even laughter.

Parents of Teens meet monthly, generally on the 3rd Wednesday evening, from 7-9PM and addresses the unique concerns of this age group, puberty, socialization needs, and transition issues.

Sibshops: Sibshops are offered for brothers and sisters who are between the ages of 7-18. The Sibshop model intersperses information and discussion activities with new games, cooking, art activities and special guests. Non-judgmental atmosphere for siblings of those on the Autism Spectrum, providing non-competitive games, crafts, food. Meets monthly on a Saturday (not December or April).

Support Group for Spanish-Speaking Parents: In conjunction with Centro Las Americas and the Autism Resource Center. 11 Sycamore Street, Worcester (Multicultural Center). See our website for more details.

Grupo de apoyo de Padres Hispanos, con niños y jóvenes que están dentro del espectro del Autismo: El Centro de Recursos de Autismo (Autism Resource Center, en inglés), en colaboración con Centro las Américas, se complace en ofrecer un grupo de apoyo para las familias que hablan español y que están criando a un niño con un Desorden de Espectro de Autismo. Este grupo se reunirá mensualmente en Centro las Américas en el 11 de la Sicomoro Street en Worcester, MA. El grupo de apoyo será codirigido por David Iborra, del personal de Centro de Recursos de Autismo, y por Ydalia Heimann, del personal de Centro. Ustedes pueden ver las fechas en la página Web del Centro de Recursos de Autismo, en el calendario que aparece en www.autismresourcecentral.org. Se ayudará a los padres a que aseguren los servicios a través de la División de Autismo del Departamento de Servicios de Desarrollo, incluyendo clínicas sobre IEP, ayuda financiera que le permita a su niño asistir a un grupo de destrezas sociales, Actividades del Diario Vivir, y clínicas para el desarrollo de apoyos visuales para sus niños, así como el apoyo y el compañerismo de otros padres que enfrentan desafíos similares. Los talleres que abordan las necesidades del grupo se ofrecerán según sea necesario.

BRAIN INJURY

Brain Injury Association of MA: Provides information, resources, support and informal counseling for families.

BRAIN INJURY HELPLINE: 800-242-0030

WEBSITE: www.biama.org

Milford Family and Survivors: Meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday from 7-8:30PM at Milford Regional Medical Center.

CONTACT: Denise Simoneau, 508-422-2559 or dsimoneau@milreg.org

North Central Stroke and Brain Injury Support Group: Meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday from 7-8:30PM at Lunenburg Public Library, 1023 Massachusetts Avenue.

CONTACT: Pat Read, 978-660-5187 or Bob Saiia, 978-582-7239

EMAIL: pjr1071@aol.com

Worcester Family & Survivors: Meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday (not July and August) from 6-7:30PM at First Baptist Church, 111 Park Avenue, Worcester (corner of Salisbury Street).

CONTACT: Beth Pusey, 800-242-0030, Ext.19

CHILDHOOD CANCER

Why Me & Sherry's House: A Worcester-based organization created to help families cope with childhood cancer, offering love and support for families with childhood cancer. All support and services delivered completely free of charge to the whole family. Monthly meetings, please call for dates.

CONTACT: Daniele Perron, 508-757-7734

E-MAIL: dperron@whyme.org

WEBSITE: www.whyme.org/family-support.php

DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Hear My Dreams Support Group, for parents of children with hearing loss:

Meets on the 2nd Tuesday of odd numbered months from 7-9PM at HearSmart Audiology, 435 King Street, Suite 2, Littleton. All are welcome, regardless of where child receives audiology services.

CONTACT: Megan Ford, Au.D, 978-952-2500

EMAIL: hearmydreams@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.hearmydreams.com

DOWN SYNDROME

Down syndrome Group: Monthly meetings are held on the first Saturday from 10AM-Noon at the Seven Hills Family Support Center, 1460 John Fitch Highway, Fitchburg.

CONTACT: Kathy Black 978-602-8697

E-MAIL: kblack@sevenhills.org

WEBSITE: www.sevenhills.org

Massachusetts DADS (Dads Appreciating Down Syndrome): An action group for Fathers of children and youth with Down Syndrome; monthly meetings and activities provide opportunities for discussion and strategizing. Visit our website or email for details.

CONTACT: Jeff Roback

E-MAIL: dadsmass@yahoo.com

WEBSITE: www.mdsc.org/programs/DADsGroup.cfm

Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress: MDSC is a statewide organization that provides information, networking opportunities, and advocacy for people with Down syndrome and their families, educators, health care professionals, and the community-at-large. The Parents First Call program provides new and expectant parents the opportunity to connect with a trained parent mentor and to receive accurate, up-to-date information.

CONTACT: 781-221-0024

E-MAIL: mdsc@mdsc.org

WEBSITE: www.mdsc.org

FAMILY SUPPORT

ARC of North Central Non-Disability Specific Support Group: Meets monthly on the 1st Thursday from 10AM-Noon at the Lawrence Library, 15 Main Street, Pepperell. Call for more information.

CONTACT: Nancy Hanley, 978-582-6203

WEBSITE: <http://www.arcofopportunity.org/programs/family-support/support-groups>

Pernet Health Parents Helping Parents Support Group (Spanish): A Spanish-speaking support group held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at varying times at Pernet Health, Worcester. Transportation and childcare are available. Please call for more information.

CONTACT: Sylvia Rosado, 508-755-1228

Senior Parent Support Group: For parents of adult children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities living at home. Monthly meetings are held on the 1st Thursday from 11:30AM-Noon at the Arc of Opportunity, 564 Main Street, Fitchburg.

CONTACT: Madeline Merchant, 978-343-6662, Ext. 1011

E-MAIL: m.merchant@arcofopportunity.org

FATHERS

Fathers Parenting/Support Group: The Fathers & Family Program provides support services to fathers in the community, incarcerated fathers at the Worcester County House of Correction, and residents of the Hector Reyes House. Weekly Parenting/Support Groups and individual case management services are offered to provide fathers with the opportunity to share personal experiences and support their efforts to strengthen their connection with their children. Occasionally meets at Pernet Family Health Services on 237 Millbury Street. Call for more information.

CONTACT: Chris Nelson, 508-755-1228

EMAIL: cnelson@pernetfamilyhealth.org

Massachusetts DADS (Dads Appreciating Down Syndrome): An action group for Fathers of children and youth with Down Syndrome; monthly meetings and activities provide opportunities for discussion and strategizing. Visit our website or email for details.

CONTACT: Jeff Roback

E-MAIL: dadsmass@yahoo.com

WEBSITE: www.mdsc.org/programs/DADsGroup.cfm

FOOD ALLERGY: See ASTHMA AND ALLERGY

GRANDPARENTS

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Provides information, training and support for grandparents raising their grandchildren. Meets monthly on the 2nd Tuesday from 6-8PM at the YWCA Worcester, with a counselor from Children's Friend, Inc. Free childcare. Call for details.

CONTACT: Elder Services of Worcester Area, 508-756-1545

KINnections Program/MSPCC: The KINnections Program connects grandparents raising grandchildren and kinship families to resources, information & activities in their community that support and strengthen families. The program provides support groups, trainings and workshops, information assistance, family focused activities/events and respite care support.

CONTACT: Deanna Forist or Lori Baeumler at KINnections/MSPCC, 617-983-5800

E-MAIL: lbaeumler@mspcc.org

WEBSITE: www.mspcc.org

GRIEF AND HEALING

Bereavement Support Groups: Two groups offer monthly meetings held at Gardner VNA, 34 Pearly Lane, Gardner: 2nd Monday from 6:30-8PM or 4th Monday from 2-3:30PM. Please call for details.

CONTACT: 978-632-1230

Children's Friends Grief Center, "The Carriage House": A grief support center for children ages 3-18 and their families who have experienced the death of someone very close. The peer support group meets every other week. There are four support groups: one for 3-6 year olds, two for 6-12 year olds, and one for teens. Support groups for those children's surviving parent and/or caregiver are held at the same time. Call for details.

CONTACT: Karen Ludington, 508-753-5425

WEBSITE: <http://childrensfriend.org/programs/grief-support/>

Community Birth/Loss Support Group Collaboratives: Provides support to parents, families and friends experiencing the loss of a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, or newborn death. Parent-to-parent telephone contacts are also available. Call for information.

Heywood Hospital, Gardner: Meets 1st Thursday of the month from 7-8:30PM.

CONTACT: Mary Ellen Alty, 978-630-6228

UMass Memorial Health Care, Worcester: Meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday from 7-8:30PM.

CONTACT: Karen Armenti, 508-421-1381

Compassionate Friends: A national self-support organization that offers friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings, with no religious affiliation or membership fees. The Mass./Conn. Borders Town Chapter meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 7:30PM at St. Anthony Padua Church, Dudley.

CONTACT: Anne, 508-248-7144

CONTACT: National Office, 877-969-0010 for Holliston/Milford, Westminister, Worcester Chapters

EMAIL: bordertownstcf@yahoo.com

WEBSITE: www.compassionatefriends.org

Compassionate Friends North Central Chapter: A support group for families who have lost a child; monthly meetings are held on the 1st Thursday at 7PM at Redemption Rock Church, Westminister.

CONTACT: Elaine, 978-786-5014

EMAIL: dgtcf@aol.com

Suicide.org: Listing of Suicide support groups in Massachusetts, which offer a forum to talk about suicide prevention, awareness and support

CONTACT: 1-800-784-2433 or 1-800-273-8255 (Spanish)

WEBSITE: www.suicide.org

Worcester SafePlace: Offering support for those bereaved by a suicide loss. Group meets on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month from 7–8:30PM at The Bridge, 4 Mann Street, Worcester. Call for more information.

CONTACT: Debbie DiMasi, 617-536-2460

E-MAIL: safeplace@samaritanshope.org

WEBSITE: www.samaritanshope.org

HYDROCEPHALUS

Hydrocephalus Association Boston Community Network: This group provides support, education, and empowerment through community for individuals and families impacted by hydrocephalus. Meetings are typically held at Children's Hospital, 9 Hope Avenue, Waltham. Call for details.

CONTACT: Jennifer Miles or Sue Wieggers

EMAIL: BostonCommunity@hydroassoc.org

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Crohn's and Colitis Foundation Parent Support Group: This group meets monthly on the 2nd Wednesday from 6:30-7:30PM at Mass. General Hospital, Yawkey Building, Room 4-4820, 55 Fruit Street, Boston. For details, call or visit: www.ccfa.org

CONTACT: Melissa Murphy, 781-449-0324

E-MAIL: mmurphy@ccfa.org

Diabetes Support Group: A support group for individuals with diabetes who are interested in learning more about managing their diabetes. Family members and friends are welcomed. **CONTACT:** 508-852-6175

Children's Hemiplegia and Stroke Support of Western Massachusetts:

We are an active support group of families that have all been impacted by infant or pediatric stroke. We meet the first Monday of every other month at Thom Infant-Toddler Family Services in Springfield. In addition to meeting every other month in Springfield, we maintain a private group on Facebook and plan family friendly activities throughout the year.

CONTACT: Eliza and Kevin Maltby, 413-567-2909

EMAIL: childhoodstrokeawareness@gmail.com

Eosinophilic Gastrointestinal Disorders Support Group: Provides support to parents and opportunities to meet and share for young adults and adults affected by EGID. Educational speakers arranged for monthly meetings, held on the 1st Monday at Children's Hospital Lexington, 482 Bedford Street from 7-9PM. Call for meeting details and RSVP.

CONTACT: Dianna Queheillalt

EMAIL: dianna@EGIDBoston.org

WEBSITE: www.EGIDBoston.org

Prader-Willi Syndrome Association of New England: Provides information and support, quarterly parent support groups, family recreation events, conferences every other year, parent to parent support, and informational newsletter. Call for details.

CONTACT: Mary Raymond, 978-207-1185

E-MAIL: murphyno7@aol.com

WEBSITE: <http://www.pwsausa.org/new-england-chapter/>

Scleroderma Syndrome Support Group: Worcester Area Group meets monthly on a Sunday at 2PM at 640 Lincoln Street, Worcester. Please call for specific dates.

CONTACT: Nancy Velleco, 508-869-2997

MENTAL HEALTH

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Central MA (NAMI): Provides support to family members and friends of the chronically mentally ill through group support meetings where experiences, problems, and solutions are shared.

CONTACT: 508-368-3562

Family Support Group Meeting – 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month, 7-9PM, Worcester Recovery Center & Hospital, 309 Belmont Street, K2 Training Center.

E-MAIL: namiworc@hotmail.com

National Alliance on Mental Illness North Central MA Inc: Provides support for families and friends of individuals diagnosed with major mental illness. Call or check the website for information: www.namincm.org

Family 2 Family Support Group: Support group for friends and family members of individuals with a mental illness. Monthly meetings are held 2nd and 4th Friday of the month from 6:30-8:30PM at the Clinton Hospital, 201 Highland Street, Clinton.

CONTACT: Edie, 978-345-2214

Family 2 Family Support Group: Support group for friends and family members of individuals with a mental illness. Monthly meetings are held 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 7-8:30PM at the Messiah Lutheran Church, Rindge Road, Fitchburg

CONTACT: Diane, 978-302-4170 or Guy, 508-736-3887

NAMI Connection Support Group: Support group for “consumers” (the person with the mental illness). Meetings are held every Thursday evening from 7:00-8:30pm at the Messiah Lutheran Church , Fitchburg

CONTACT: Caryl, 508-574-0603

E-MAIL: r.beales@yahoo.com

PAL Central MA Support Groups: Offers a support groups for parents and youth who are managing emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs. All regularly scheduled meetings are held at 51 Union Street, Suite 308, Worcester.

CONTACT: PPAL and Youth Move, 508-767-9725

E-MAIL: info@ppal.net

WEBSITE: www.ppal.net

Parent and Caregiver Support: Support group for parents and caregivers raising a child or teen with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs. The group meets monthly on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays from 5:30-7:30PM.

CONTACT: bpond@ppal.net

H.O.P.E., Helping Others Promote Equality: A PAL youth group for teens ages 14-19 who want to connect, make a difference, and have fun while living with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs. Mentors work with and support the group weekly.

YAYA: Young Adults & Youth Advocacy: For young adults ages 17-25 year old who are living with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs. YAYA is a group of young people who meet twice a month for support, skill building, connections and new friends as they transition towards more independent living. The group meets twice a month for support, skill building, and dinner. **CONTACT:** lproulx@ppal.net or cwatts@ppal.net

TEAMA: Teens Educating About Mental Awareness: For young people ages 13+who want to share their stories safely and effectively with others. This Speakers Bureau meets to develop public speaking skills and their own voice, in order to speak in the community and help make change happen for young people living with mental health, behavioral, or emotional needs. Twice-monthly meetings are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday.

SIBS: Support and Information for Brothers and Sisters: A group for children ages 6-14 whose brother or sister has emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges. Groups are activity-based and offer basic, age-appropriate mental health education and coping strategies – all in the context of good, safe fun.

Moving Forward: Our Journey: A support group for empowering families through transition planning. This group is for parents/caregivers of transitional age youth(16-30) Meeting will be held the first and third Thursday of each month from 6:00-8:00 pm.

CONTACT: rbenoit@ppal.net or ahurst@ppal.net

Parents Helping Parents: Statewide network of support groups for parents and other adults in a caretaking role, who are isolated or overwhelmed caring for a child affected by emotional and behavioral challenges. Group members share their parenting difficulties and successes, parenting skills, and explore different ways of dealing with family challenges and everyday issues. Visit the website to locate a group in your area; childcare available at some.

Parental Stress Line, 24-hour Helpline: 1-800-632-8188

WEBSITE: www.parentshelpingparents.org

YOU, INC. Parent/Caregiver Support Group: A support group for families that have a child or adolescent with behavioral, emotional or mental health care needs. Groups meet every Thursday at 10-11:30AM and 6:30-8:00PM at 205 School Street, Gardner.

CONTACT: Ann Berube, 978-630-4918, Ext. 38

E-MAIL: BerubeA@youinc.org

Youth and Family Center-North: A program of Central Mass. Communities of Care that provides supportive groups, classes, and activities for families in Northern Worcester County. Meetings are held at 76 Summer Street, Fitchburg. Call for more information.

CONTACT: 978-829-0163; 866-602-6955

Youth and Family Center-South: A program of Central Mass. Communities of Care that provides supportive groups, classes, and activities for families that may lead to CHINS and/or court involvement. Meetings are held at 251 Main Street, Webster. Call for more information.

CONTACT: 508-856-5760 or 800-980-1347

SIBLING SUPPORT

Me Time for Lil' Sibs: For siblings 3-6 years old; Introduces Autism through storybooks and discussion. This is a Parent-Child activity, this 6-week series is offered periodically at Autism Support Center of Central Massachusetts, West Boylston.

CONTACT: Sue Loring, 508-835-4278

E-MAIL: autism@HMEA.org

WEBSITE: www.autismresourcecentral.org

SIBshops: Autism Support Center offers groups for siblings (ages 7-18). The Sibshop model intersperses information, guided discussion, and activities with games and food! These groups run on Saturdays, once a month, at various locations in our area. Call for more information.

CONTACT: Sue Loring, 508-835-4278

E-MAIL: autism@HMEA.org

WEBSITE: www.autismresourcecentral.org

SIBS: Support and Information for Brothers and Sisters: A group for sisters and brothers (ages 6–14) living with siblings who are experiencing emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges. The groups are activity-based and offer basic, age-appropriate mental health education and coping strategies - all in the context of good, safe fun.

CONTACT: PAL Central MA, 508-767-9725

WEBSITE: www.ppal.net

TOURETTE SYNDROME

Tourette Syndrome Association, Inc. TSA offers resources and referrals to help people and adults living with Tourette Syndrome and their families. Call for more information.

WEBSITE: www.tsa-ma.org