

2026

Program and
Resource Guide
for Grandparents
Raising Their
Grandchildren

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Hi! My name is Bianca, and I am a student in the occupational therapy doctorate program at Boston University. Go Terriers!

As part of my doctoral studies, I created this program and resource guide to support grandparent caregivers across Massachusetts.

Please reach out to me at bpd0015@bu.edu with any questions.

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I also worked closely with the Center for Family Connection team in Rutland, Massachusetts. They enhanced my understanding of children's attachment and behavior and shared their expertise to help inform my educational content.

A little bit of background:

Occupational therapists work to support people's participation in their daily occupations. When we talk about occupations, we are referring to all the things you want to do, need to do, or are expected to do in your day-to-day life. This can include getting dressed, bathing, caregiving, cooking, cleaning, driving, and doing any other activity that is meaningful to you.¹

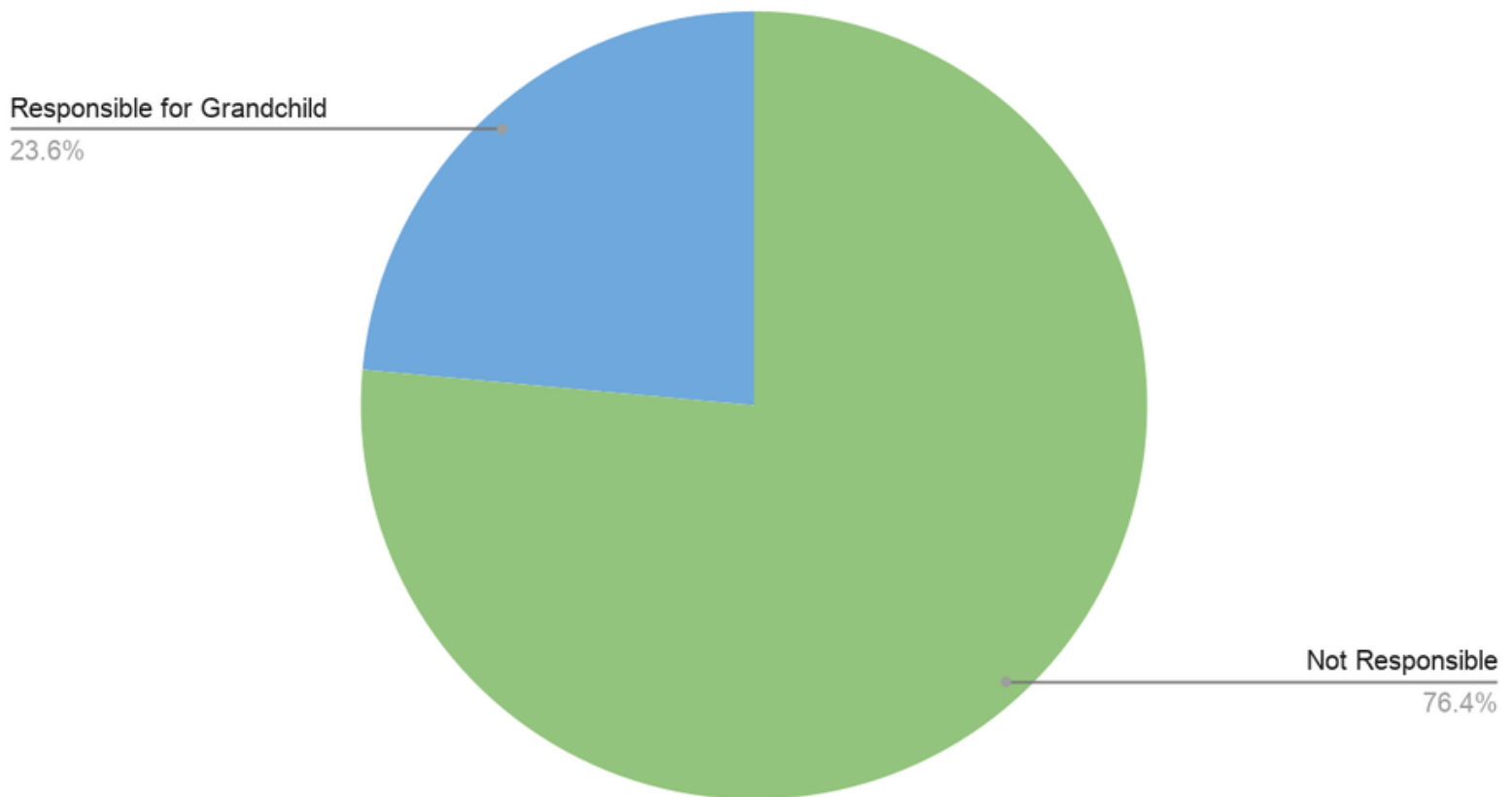
This guide serves as a tool to support grandparents and grandchildren by providing information and resources that may help them participate in activities that support their health and well-being.

Grandparents in Massachusetts

As of 2024, approximately 26,718 Massachusetts grandparents are responsible for the care of at least one grandchild under 18.²

- 34% of these grandparents are providing care to grandchildren with no parent present within the household.
- Data show that about 13,878 of these grandparents are aged 60 or older, with the remainder aged 30 to 59.
- 17,828 caregivers are female, and 8,890 are male.
- 7,657 caregivers reported having a disability, representing 29% of all grandparent caregivers.

Grandparents in Massachusetts



Why Do Grandparents Become Caregivers to Their Grandchildren?

From interviews and survey responses, Massachusetts grandparents have reported various reasons that they gained custody of their grandchildren, including:

- Parents experiencing substance use disorder
- Parents experiencing mental health concerns
- Parents being deceased
- Children experiencing abuse or neglect

Additional circumstances have been identified as ways in which grandparents become caregivers to their grandchildren, such as:³

- Parents being incarcerated
- Single-parent families requiring more support
- Families facing economic hardship
- Parents being unable to care for their children during military deployment

Why is Kinship Care Important?

This resource is taken in its entirety from Child Welfare Information Gateway⁴

Minimizes trauma.

- Many children who live in kinship care have experienced traumatic events, such as being abused or neglected. Being removed from their home is often a traumatic experience, and children may suffer the loss of their parents, friends, neighborhoods, and schools. When children live with kin, they are often able to maintain connections and familiar supports, which can reduce the trauma of removal and help children heal from past trauma.

Preserves background identity.

- Having a strong connection to communities and cultural backgrounds can lead to greater self-esteem, higher education levels, improved coping abilities, and decreased levels of loneliness and depression. Living with kin helps children preserve and strengthen these ties by maintaining connections to things like language, food, holidays, and clothing.

Increases placement stability.

- Children in kinship care are less likely to experience as many moves to various foster homes and families as children in traditional foster care.

Improves behavioral outcomes.

- Children in kinship care display fewer behavioral problems than those in traditional foster care.

Promotes sibling ties.

- Kinship care increases the likelihood that siblings will live together or remain connected. Siblings' relationships are often the longest-lasting of their lives. These relationships can take on even more importance for children removed from their parents. If it isn't possible for a kin caregiver to care for all the siblings, it is especially important that they help siblings stay in touch. These ties can provide some stability and permanency.

What Does the Literature Say?

Resilience

According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is defined as the ability to overcome challenges, particularly through the use of mental, emotional, and behavioral strategies.⁵

Dr. Bert Hayslip Jr., a grandparenting expert, has previously discussed how

“Many grandparent kinship caregivers are resilient in the face of the many challenges of raising their grandchildren.”⁶

Various skills and factors have supported grandparents’ resilience when handling challenges, including health problems, financial stress, social isolation, and fragmented formal support systems.⁷

- Coping skills, problem-solving skills, and learning from past mistakes are important parts of resilience among grandparent caregivers.
- Additionally, social support, spirituality, insight, and family unity are identified as factors that have supported grandparents’ resilience.

A Second Chance⁸

Grandparent caregivers have discussed how raising their grandchildren has given them an opportunity to:

- Feel more experienced as a parent the second time around.
- Provide for their grandchildren in a way they were not able to when raising their children.
- Participate in activities that they had not previously done with their children.

Coping and Wisdom⁹

Grandparent caregivers of grandchildren with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have discussed the positive ways in which they cope while raising their grandchildren. Additionally, they have talked about the wisdom that they have gained through their experiences.

Coping

- Celebrating progress: Using accomplishments as a reason to rejoice
- Having unconditional love: Feeling like their grandchild is the light of their life, love of their life, or best friend
- Focusing on the positive: Being grateful and identifying things about caregiving that have been rewarding

Wisdom

- Feeling personal growth: Thinking about everything they have learned from raising their grandchild
- Connecting with a village: Understanding the power of working with social supports, including friends, family, neighbors, teachers, and therapists
- Having insight for others: Educating people on ASD, supporting other grandparent caregivers, and focusing on needed resources and policies

Being and Staying Healthy^{10,11}

Grandparents have noted how raising their grandchildren has helped them stay healthy.

- Wanting to stay healthy, eat properly, and live longer for their grandchildren in the future.
- Stating that caregiving has made them physically healthy and kept them feeling young.
- Keeping their minds sharp by handling challenges and helping their grandchildren with homework.

Resilience, coping, wisdom, staying healthy, and a second chance at parenting have been identified as positive effects of taking on a caregiving role as a grandparent.

From interviews and survey responses, grandparents also reported several positives they associate with raising their grandchildren, including:

- Being able to “bridge a generation gap.”
- Having a grandchild who is “wonderful, very intelligent, with a happy personality, despite his circumstances.”
- Knowing that their grandchild will “have a healthy upbringing, routines, structure, and positive guidance enabling her to become a successful adult.”
- Having a grandchild who “keeps me young and laughing!”

Although grandparent caregivers report meaningful rewards, research also documents substantial challenges associated with this role.

- Grandparent caregivers report poorer health and well-being than non-custodial grandparents.¹²
- Grandparent caregivers experience role confusion and social isolation from peers.^{13,14}
- Many grandparent caregivers express feelings of sadness, frustration, loss, and grief as a result of changes associated with assuming custody of their grandchildren.¹⁵
- Grandchildren raised by their grandparents have a higher risk for mental health concerns.¹⁶
- Grandchildren raised by their grandparents have a higher risk for behavioral difficulties.¹⁷
- Many grandchildren raised by their grandparents have experienced some form of trauma.¹⁸

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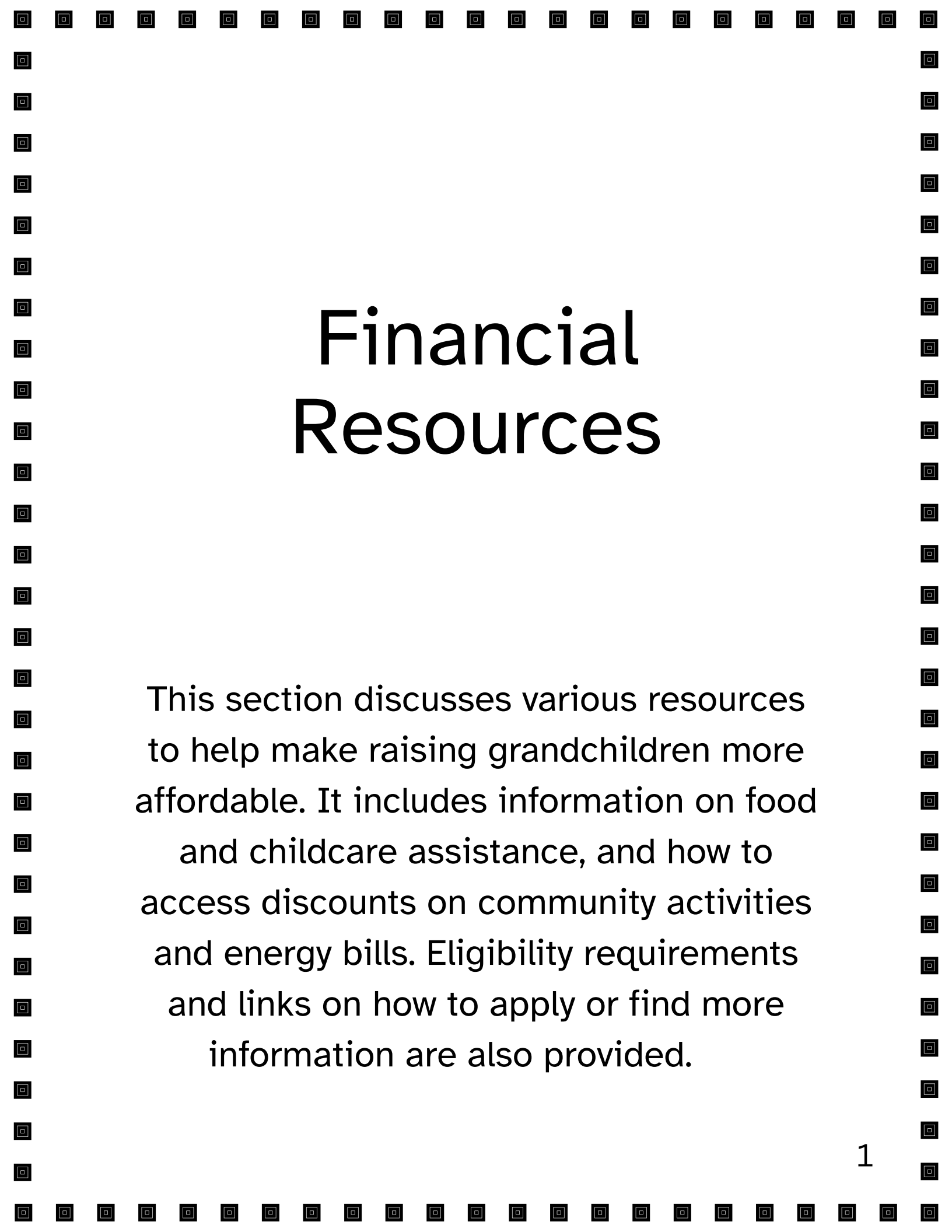
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Financial Resources

This section discusses various resources to help make raising grandchildren more affordable. It includes information on food and childcare assistance, and how to access discounts on community activities and energy bills. Eligibility requirements and links on how to apply or find more information are also provided.

Financial Resources

Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC)¹⁹

WIC is a free nutrition program that serves families throughout Massachusetts.

- Their primary focus is on pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under 5.
- If you are a father, **grandparent**, foster parent, or legal guardian of a child under 5, you can apply for WIC benefits for your child.

You and your family are automatically income eligible for WIC if you currently receive:

- MassHealth or Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC)

Income Eligibility Guidelines

Family Size	Yearly Income
1	\$29,526
2	\$40,034
3	\$50,542
4	\$61,050
5	\$71,558
Each Additional	Add \$10,508

To apply for WIC, click [here](https://www.mass.gov/forms/apply-for-wic-online) to enter your information to be contacted by a representative or type <https://www.mass.gov/forms/apply-for-wic-online> into your web browser.



WICShopper App²⁰

WICShopper is a free app available on the App Store and Google Play Store.

When you download the app, choose Massachusetts as your WIC agency, and then enter the 16-digit number on your WIC card.

With the app, you will be able to:

- Track your WIC benefits and available balance
- Use your phone to scan items in the store to see if they are WIC eligible
- Find local stores that are WIC eligible
- Receive alerts about updates, such as food recalls
- Find recipes to prepare using WIC foods

WIC Energy Discounts²¹

With WIC eligibility, you may also be able to get discounted rates on energy bills through Eversource and National Grid.

- Eversource customers are eligible for a 42% discount on electric accounts and a 25% discount on gas accounts.
- National Grid customers may be eligible for discounts ranging from 32% to 71%, depending on family income and household size.

In addition to receiving WIC benefits, Massachusetts residents may be eligible for these energy bill discounts if they receive:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- MassHealth
- Emergency Aid to Elders, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Public Housing
- Head Start
- And more



To apply for the discounted energy bill through Eversource, click [here](#) or type <https://www.eversource.com/residential/account-billing/payment-assistance/discount-rate> into your web browser.

To apply for the discounted energy bill through National Grid, click [here](#) or type <https://www.nationalgridus.com/Discount-Rate-App-MA> into your web browser.

WIC Museum and Cultural Organizations Discount²²

With a WIC card, families are eligible for free or discounted admission to more than 200 concerts, museums, zoos, performances, and more.

Participating locations include:

- EcoTarium
- Boston Ballet
- Discovery Museum
- Stone Zoo
- Fall River Symphony Orchestra
- Mass MoCA

For more information about WIC-eligible locations, location-specific discounts, and how to receive the discounts, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-discounts-with-your-wic-card> into your web browser.

SNAP members are also eligible for these free and discounted admissions with their EBT card through their Card to Culture program.

- For more information on how to receive these discounts with your EBT card, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ebt-card-to-culture-organizations> into your web browser.



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)²³

SNAP, also known as food stamps, is a monthly benefit program that provides money for food.

To check if you and your family are eligible for SNAP benefits, click [here](#) or type <https://dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/screening> into your web browser.

If you are eligible for SNAP and begin to participate in the program, you will receive a card in the mail, called an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card, to use at stores and farmers markets.

- The EBT card looks and works like a debit card.

With your EBT card, you are able to buy:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Dairy products
- Breads and cereals
- Snack foods and non-alcoholic drinks
- Seeds and plants to grow food for the household

To apply for SNAP benefits online, you can click [here](#) or type <https://dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/apply> into your web browser.

SUN Bucks (Summer EBT)²⁴

SUN Bucks is a program that gives families additional money to buy food for their children when schools are closed during the summer.

Many families who receive SNAP benefits are automatically enrolled in the SUN Bucks program.

- If you are not automatically enrolled and need to apply, click [here](#) or type <https://dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/sunbucks> into your web browser.



SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)²⁵

The RMP allows Massachusetts residents to buy food from specific restaurants and food trucks using their EBT card.

Eligibility:

- Those who are 60 years of age or older
- Those who are experiencing homelessness
- Those with disabilities

To see if you are eligible, call 1-800-997-2555 and press 6 for the Restaurant Meals Program.

- If the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) knows you are over 60, experiencing homelessness, or have a disability, you should already be enrolled in the program.
- You can call the number above to notify your case manager. Make sure to have your EBT card number available.

To find which restaurants and food trucks accept the RMP, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/snap-rmp-client-faq> into your web browser.

- When using your EBT card to pay at a restaurant or food truck, let your server know that you will be using SNAP.
- SNAP benefits do not cover tip/gratuity, so please plan accordingly.
- Meals purchased through the RMP are not subject to the meals tax.



Project Bread²⁶

Project Bread is an organization that works to improve access to food for Massachusetts residents.

- You can call or text their foodsource hotline at 1-800-645-8333.
- Counselors can help with finding hot meal programs and food pantries.

They also have a page with various recipes created by chef educators and registered dietitians.

- To find the recipes, click [here](#) or type <https://projectbread.org/recipes> into your web browser.

Summer Eats²⁷

Summer Eats is a Project Bread program that provides free meals to kids and teens during the summer.

- No ID or registration is required.
- Anyone under 18 can access food through the program.
- Caregivers cannot pick up food and bring it to their children.
- Meals typically must be consumed at the sites.

There are many sites across Massachusetts that participate in the program, and many allocate time for both breakfast and lunch.

- To find participating locations near you, type “Project Bread Summer Eats” into your web browser and click on the Project Bread website to find their interactive map.

MSPCA-Angell²⁸

The MSPCA-Angell is a nonprofit organization with animal shelters and clinics that support and protect animals across Massachusetts.

- MSPCA-Angell keeps a list of food pantries that provide pet food. To access the list, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mspca.org/food-pantries/> into your web browser.
- Call a location first to make sure the pantry has pet food available.



Massachusetts Hearing Aid Program²⁹

The program pays for hearing aids for children from birth to age 21.

- Families must meet income requirements in order to qualify.

Financial Guidelines - 300% of Federal Poverty Level Guidelines³⁰

Family Size	Maximum Adjusted Gross Income
1	\$47,880
2	\$64,920
3	\$81,960
4	\$99,000
5	\$116,040
Each Additional	Add \$17,040

Family Size: The applicant, parent(s), guardian(s), dependent siblings, and other dependents

Adjusted Gross Income: The family's total annual income before taxes, minus allowable medical expenses and other deductions.

Families should complete the application with their child's audiologist. The audiologist can then submit the application to Sarah.Stone@mass.gov.

- The application form can be found by clicking [here](#) or by typing www.mass.gov/doc/hearing-aid-program-for-children-application-2023-pdf/download into your web browser.

Additional details about the application process can be found on the next page.



What You Need to Apply:

Written Documentation of Household Income

- Federal tax forms (including W-2s) of all individuals whose income contributes to the family's gross income.
- Income not reported on federal tax forms must be submitted with written verification.

Provision of All Medical Bills

- All medical bills (including dental) paid or incurred during the past 12 months.
- It can be in the form of receipts or copies of billing statements.

Letter of Financial Eligibility

- After the forms and documentation are reviewed, you will receive a letter determining your financial eligibility.
- This letter is only a notice of eligibility for the program and is not a hearing aid purchase authorization.

Approvals are only made after the program has received all reports and recommendations from your audiologist and a price quote from a participating hearing aid dispenser.

- The Hearing Aid Program Price Quote form can be found by clicking [here](#) or by typing www.mass.gov/how-to/hearing-aid-program into your web browser.
- Your audiologist will order the hearing aids and bill the Hearing Aid Program directly.





Department of Children and Families (DCF) Subsidy³¹

Kinship families involved with DCF may be eligible for a subsidy (financial assistance) through the department.

Those with guardianship of their grandchild, sponsored by DCF, may be eligible for a subsidy if at least one of the following applies:

- The grandchild returning to their biological parents is not an appropriate option.
- Adopting the grandchild has been considered but is not an appropriate option.

Those who have adopted their grandchild, sponsored by DCF or a non-profit agency, may be eligible for a subsidy if at least one of the following applies:

- The grandchild has at least one diagnosed special need.
- The grandchild is difficult to place because they are part of a sibling group that is being adopted together.
- The grandchild has a risk of having special needs but is not able to be diagnosed yet because of their age.

If you are interested in learning about the subsidy through DCF, please reach out to the DCF worker that is assigned to your case.

- Subsidy is not dependent on household income.
- You can email dcfsubsidyunit@mass.gov with any questions.

Respite

LifePath Caregiver Grants³²

LifePath supports aging adults and caregivers in Western and North Central Massachusetts.

They have grants for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, which can be used to pay for respite care or to help fund summer camp.

- Of note, grandparents must find someone (a friend, family member, neighbor, etc.) to provide the respite care.
- To learn more about the grant and how to apply, please call 413-773-5555.

For more information on LifePath and the services they offer, click [here](#) or type <https://lifepathma.org/> into your web browser.

- For grandparent caregiver-specific resources, click [here](#) or type <https://lifepathma.org/what-we-offer/information-and-consultations/grandparents-raising-grandchildren/> into your web browser.

Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA)³³

CCFA helps families pay for child care and before/after school programs.

- Families must demonstrate a need for child care and meet income requirements.
- There may be additional fees depending on your family's household size and income. This is known as a "parent fee".

Families who receive CCFA have to demonstrate a need for child care.

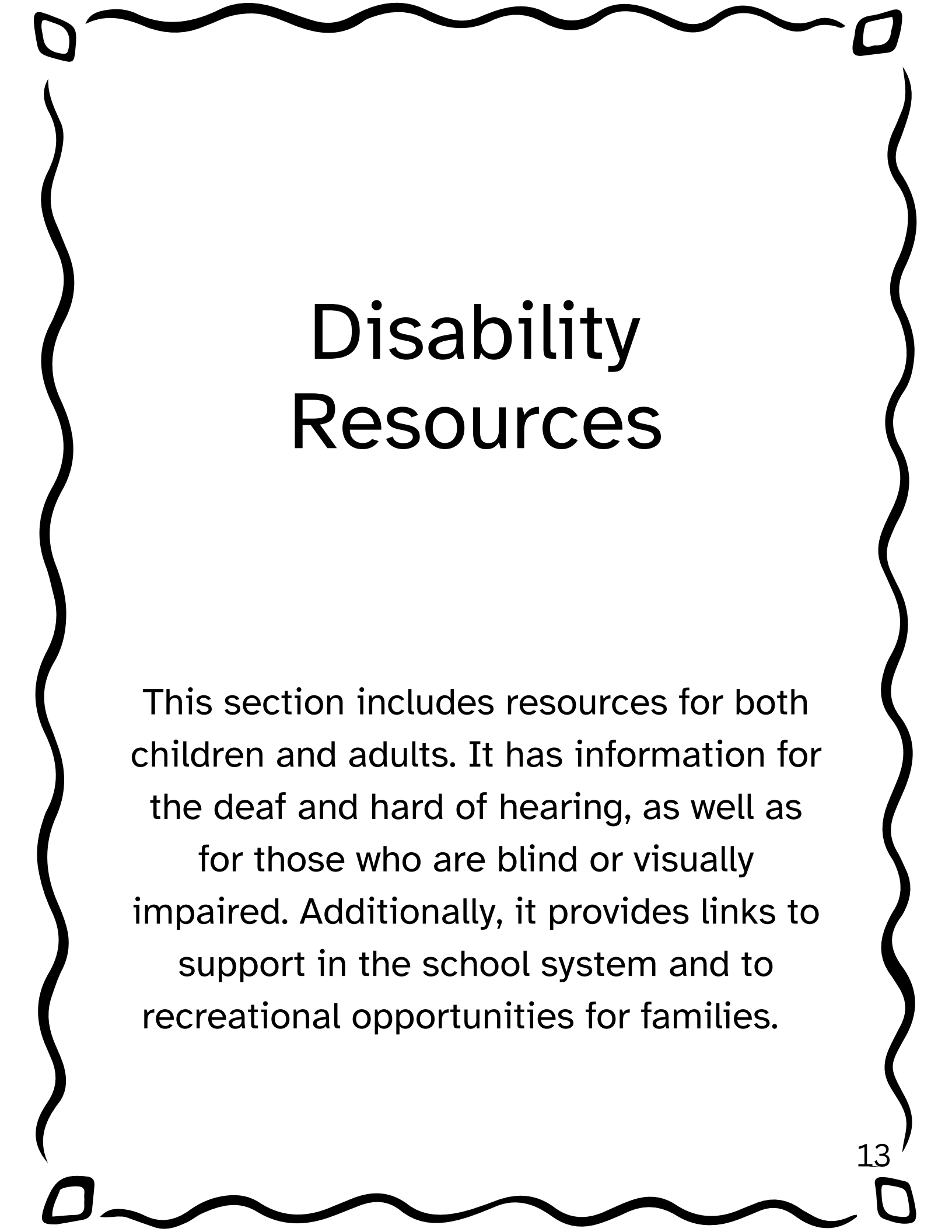
Those who qualify include families where caregivers are:

- Working
- Participating in an education, training, or job search program
- Experiencing homelessness
- Experiencing or have experienced domestic violence
- Retired and older than 65
- Actively deployed in the military
- Disabled
- Participating in a substance use treatment program

Income Guidelines for Financial Assistance Eligibility

Household Size	Maximum Monthly Income (before taxes)
2	\$7,994
3	\$9,874
4	\$11,755
5	\$13,636
6	\$15,869

To apply for the Child Care Financial Assistance, click [here](https://childcare.mass.gov/families/login) or type <https://childcare.mass.gov/families/login> into your web browser.



Disability Resources

This section includes resources for both children and adults. It has information for the deaf and hard of hearing, as well as for those who are blind or visually impaired. Additionally, it provides links to support in the school system and to recreational opportunities for families.



Disability Resources

American Sign Language (ASL)³⁴

ASL is a language that is typically used in North America by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. People communicate in ASL through hand movements, body language, and facial expressions.

ASL Classes

Children's Center for Communication and Beverly School for the Deaf (CCCBSD)³⁵

The CCCBSD offers sign language classes for children, teens, and adults.

- Children: Ages 6-10
- Teens: Ages 11-15
- Adults: Ages 16+

For more information on class content, cost, and how to register, click [here](#) or type <https://cccbsd.org/community-programs/asl-classes/> into your web browser.

- You can reach out to asl@cccbsd.org for additional support and to ask about in-person and virtual options.

Learning Center for the Deaf³⁶

The Learning Center for the Deaf offers sign language classes ranging from Level 1 to Conversational ASL.

- Participants must be at least 16 years old to register for classes.

For information on class content, virtual options, and registration, click [here](#) or type <https://www.tlcdeaf.org/services/community-asl-classes> into your web browser.



To join their email list and get updates on when sessions occur, click [here](#) or type <https://www.tlcdeaf.org/community-asl-class-inquiry> into your web browser.

- Sessions typically cost \$210 for six weeks of classes.

Your Access Advocates³⁷

Your Access Advocates offers Level I and Level II sign language classes during the fall and spring.

- Sessions cost \$225 for 12 weeks of classes.

To ask about the ASL classes that are being offered, email plangone@youraccessadvocates.org or call 508-556-1600.

- Click [here](#) or type <https://youraccessadvocates.org/services/deaf-hard-of-hearing/> into your web browser for more information on additional services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

To participate, they request that you join via Zoom from your tablet or laptop, not your phone.



Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Visor Card³⁸

The card should be printed and attached to your driver's side sun visor.

- It can be used as a tool if you are ever stopped by the police. There are various pictures to help you and the officer communicate.
 - This includes icons for traffic violations (e.g., expired tags, broken brake lights, or texting while driving) and icons indicating a need for help (e.g., lost, looking for a hospital, or needing a tow).
- There are also communication tips for officers, such as “shining a flashlight in my face will make it difficult for me to understand you.”

For specific instructions on using the visor card, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/doc/visor-card-instructions/download> into your web browser.

- To print out the actual visor card, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-visor-card/download> into your web browser.



Be My Eyes³⁹

Be My Eyes is an app that provides visual support to blind and low-vision individuals.

- Over 10,500,000 volunteers and 1,050,000 blind and low-vision users are registered.
 - Assistance is available in 180 languages across more than 150 countries.
- 

With the app, users are connected with volunteers who receive a call on their device.

- Using your device's outward-facing camera, volunteers are able to instantaneously provide you with descriptions or assist you with various tasks.

The app's "Community" feature shares users' personal stories and experiences and includes the Be My Eyes podcast, as well as podcasts on accessibility, inclusivity, and technology.

There is also a service directory that connects you to various blindness organizations nationwide.

- Additionally, the service directory includes many well-known brands to help users access product and service help, support, and advice.



The app is free and can be downloaded onto Apple and Android devices.

For more information about the Be My Eyes app and what it offers, click [here](https://www.bemyeyes.com/) or type <https://www.bemyeyes.com/> into your web browser.



Massachusetts Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired⁴⁰

The MABVI is an organization that supports Massachusetts adults who are blind or visually impaired by providing resources, services, and education.

Exams

- MABVI can help make referrals to various low vision centers across Massachusetts.
 - Optometrists can assist in supporting a person's remaining vision, prescribing optical devices, and making referrals to other services.
- To find low vision centers near you, call 888-613-2777 or fill out your contact information by clicking [here](https://www.mabvi.org/contact_us/) or typing https://www.mabvi.org/contact_us/ into your web browser.
 - Please check whether low-vision exams are covered by your insurance plan.

Rehabilitation

- Occupational therapists with specialized low vision training offer various in-home services, including:
 - Conducting a home safety assessment
 - Evaluating lighting, eliminating glare, and reducing clutter
 - Modifying appliances with tactile markings
 - Helping with routines and medication management
 - Teaching various adaptive strategies
 - Recommending and providing training on adaptive aids
 - Providing training on the use of accessibility features and apps for the blind and visually impaired
- For help getting a referral and receiving more information on cost and coverage, call 888-613-2777



Access Technology Training

- Trainings focus on teaching blind or visually impaired users how technology, such as apps and devices, can enhance daily functioning and independence.
- There are in-person training locations at 12 sites in Massachusetts
 - For hours of operation, addresses, and contact information, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mabvi.org/mabvi-access-technology-and-training-centers/> into your web browser.
- Virtual training is available on Thursdays from 10-11 AM
 - Email Jerry Feliz, the director of Access Technology, at jfeliz@mabcommunity.org for more information.
- For additional questions, call 888-613-2777 or email ATCenter@mabcommunity.org

Adjustment Counseling

- MABVI partners can help those who are blind or visually impaired access services to address difficulties associated with experiencing vision loss.
- The therapists can provide services to individuals or couples, and appointments are conducted over the phone.
- To inquire about receiving adjustment counseling services, click [here](#) or type https://www.mabvi.org/contact_us/ into your web browser and fill out your contact information.



Local Resources

- For additional local resources and other organizations that serve those who are blind or visually impaired, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mabvi.org/resources/local-resources/> into your web browser.



Boston University Infant-Toddler Augmentative and Alternative Communication Program⁴¹

Augmentative and Alternative Communication, or AAC, consists of tools and strategies intended to supplement or replace typical speech and/or writing.

- AACs support individuals with speech and language difficulties to participate in functional communication.

Through Boston University's Master's Program in Speech-Language Pathology, graduate student clinicians provide evaluations and interventions to children aged 0-3 with sensory-based (vision or hearing differences) or motor-based neurodevelopmental disabilities and delays in speech-language milestones.

- All services that are provided through the program are free.
- To schedule, please reach out to Katie Nerlino by emailing knerlino@bu.edu

Equipment Loaner Programs

REquipment is an organization that refurbishes donated durable medical equipment and assistive technology.⁴²

- The equipment is then reallocated to older adults and individuals with disabilities who request it.

To request available equipment on the organization's website, click [here](#) or type <https://requipmentma.org/search-equipment/categories> into your web browser.

- For additional durable medical equipment reuse organizations, click [here](#) or type <https://dmereuse.org/reuse-resource-list/> into your web browser.
- For questions or concerns, please call 800-261-9841.



Small Miracles in Life Exist (SMILE Mass) is an organization that supports families of individuals with disabilities through education, vacation, and recreation.⁴³

As part of the organization, there is a loaner program where families can borrow equipment, including:

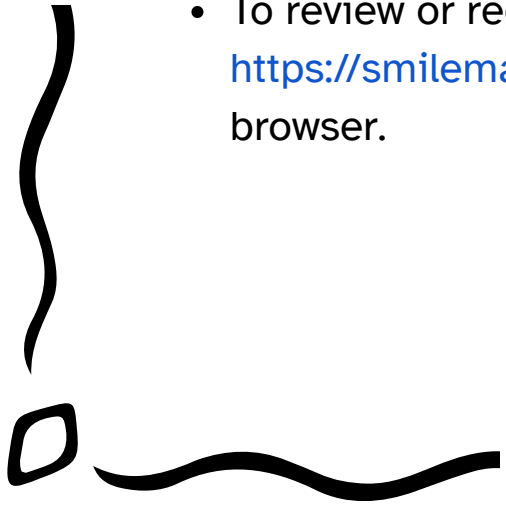
- Floating beach wheelchairs
- Ramps
- Portable Hoyer lifts
- Transport chairs
- Shower and bath chairs
- Freedom running strollers

To borrow equipment, fill out the form by clicking [here](#) or by typing <https://smilemass.org/equipment-loaner-program/#borrow-equipment-form> into your web browser.

SMILE Mass has also donated floating beach wheelchairs to multiple public beaches across the New England region.

- To review the list of beaches with floating wheelchairs, click [here](#) or type <https://smilemass.org/equipment-loaner-program/> and scroll down to the bottom of the page.

The SMILE MASS website lists weekly activities and upcoming events promoting social recreation.

- To review or register for activities, click [here](#) to type <https://smilemass.org/social-rec-activities/> into your web browser.
- 



Equip2Adapt⁴⁴

Equip2Adapt is a website, created by an occupational therapist, that provides easily accessible information on assistive technology (AT).

On the website, you can find AT resources, tips for managing your AT at home, and various do-it-yourself guides to create your own AT devices at a lower cost using things you may already have.

The website is organized into several categories, including:

- Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)
- Adaptive Clothing
- Adaptive Equipment
- Assistive Devices
- DIY Assistive Technology
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Home Access
- Mobility Equipment
- Technology Accessibility
- Wheelchair Mobility

There is helpful information on choosing the appropriate equipment that works for you, ways to accommodate weather changes (e.g., adaptive winter clothing or managing heat and sweat in a wheelchair), AT materials for school settings, and more.

To explore what Equip2Adapt offers, click [here](https://equip2adapt.com/) or type <https://equip2adapt.com/> into your web browser.



Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC)⁴⁵

MAC is an organization that addresses barriers to educational opportunities faced by children and youth.

They provide resources, sample letters and emails, and links to Massachusetts laws and regulations explaining your and your child's rights within the school system.

Topics that are covered on the website include:

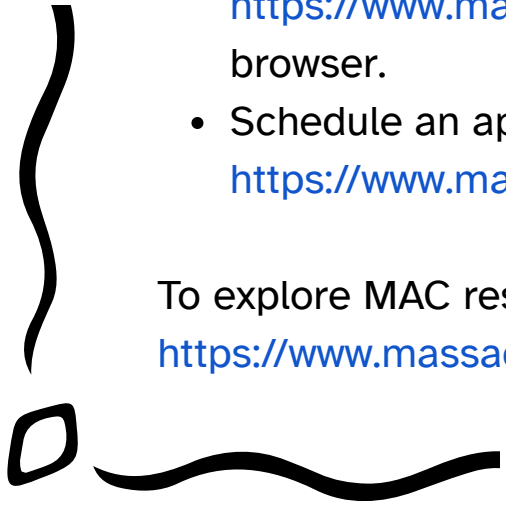
- Race and Disability
- Immigrant and Latinx Families
- Special Education
- Autism
- School Discipline Reform

The organization has a helpline that provides guidance, resources, and referrals. Priority is given to children with disabilities, children who have been expelled or suspended, English learner students, and children who have experienced racial discrimination and bullying.

To contact the helpline, you can:

- Call (617) 357-8431 and leave a voicemail
- Text 617 874-5354
- Submit an online intake form by clicking [here](https://www.massadvocates.org/helplineforms) or by typing <https://www.massadvocates.org/helplineforms> into your browser.
- Schedule an appointment by clicking [here](https://www.massadvocates.org/helpline) or by typing <https://www.massadvocates.org/helpline> into your web browser.

To explore MAC resources and information, click [here](https://www.massadvocates.org/) or type <https://www.massadvocates.org/> into your web browser.





Greater Massachusetts Special Needs Events⁴⁶

This is a website created by a parent who wanted a collective resource of information on programs and services available to their son with autism across Massachusetts.

The website lists various recreational opportunities for families of children with special needs or disabilities, including:

- Arts & Theater
- Museum Programs
- Music & Dance
- Parks & Beaches
- Sensory & Inclusive Movies
- Special Olympics
- Swimming
- Team Sports

To review the available recreational programs, click [here](#) or type <https://spedchildmass.com/special-needs-recreation-programs-events-massachusetts/> into your web browser.

- Please verify event information for potential updates and/or changes.

You can also find a list of camps and fairs throughout New England that offer services tailored to individuals with disabilities.

- For information on the potential camps and fairs in your area, click [here](#) or type <https://spedchildmass.com/special-needs-camps-fairs-massachusetts/>



Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN)⁴⁷

The FCSN is an organization that provides advocacy, education, and community support to individuals and families with special needs.

On their website, they provide a directory of local resources, which can be organized by location, topic, and language.

- Within their recreation/arts tab, there are 150+ programs listed, along with their phone numbers and websites to learn about the activities they offer.
- Click [here](#) or type <https://fcsn.org/resources-search/> and filter the entries by selecting the “Recreation/Arts” topic.

Berklee Institute for Accessible Arts Education (BIAAE)⁴⁸

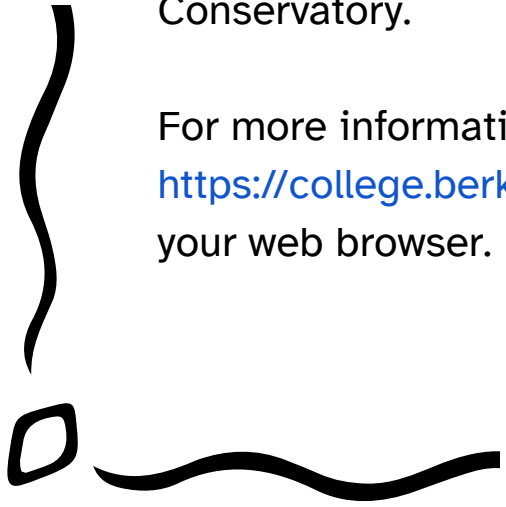
The BIAAE, through the Berklee College of Music, provides programs tailored for individuals with disabilities to participate in performing and visual arts education.

Programs offered for participants include:

- Dance
- Theater
- Music

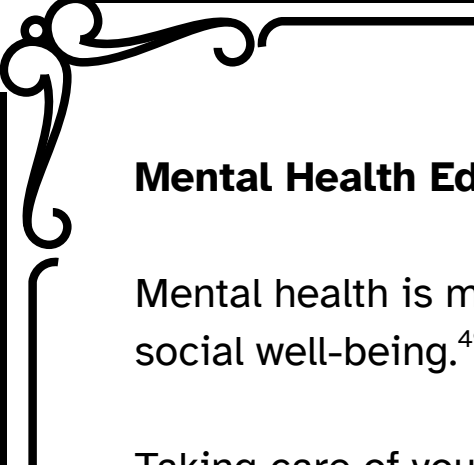
Berklee also hosts sensory-friendly performances at the Boston Conservatory.

For more information on the BIAAE programs, click [here](#) or type <https://college.berklee.edu/BIAAE/arts-education-programs> into your web browser.



Mental Health Resources

This section covers the topics of grief, substance use disorder, and taking care of your mental health. Additionally, there is information on where to find state and local mental health resources.



Mental Health Education

Mental health is made up of a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being.⁴⁹

Taking care of your mental health is important, as it can help you:

- Create and build connections with others
- Manage stress and emotions
- Find purpose and meaning
- Make decisions and solve problems

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, there are several ways to nurture your mental health through self-care, such as:⁵⁰

- Exercise regularly
- Eat healthy and drink water
- Get enough sleep
- Spend time with friends and family
- Do activities that you enjoy

You should look for professional help if you have experienced the symptoms listed below for two or more weeks.

- Having a hard time sleeping or concentrating
- Changes in appetite or unplanned weight changes
- Having a hard time getting up in the morning due to mood
- Having a loss of interest in things that are usually enjoyable
- Not being able to complete usual tasks and activities
- Feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness

You can also call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 9-8-8 if you're experiencing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol/drug use concerns, or just need someone to talk to.⁵¹



Substance Use Disorders

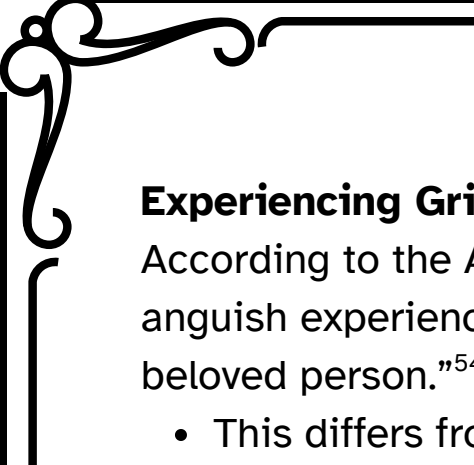
According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), substance use disorder is a mental health condition where individuals have a persistent urge to find and use drugs. Through sustained drug use, the brain changes and makes individuals continue to crave the drug more.⁵²

Why are some people impacted by SUD while others are not?

- Biology: Genetics, gender, ethnicity, and mental health
- Environment: Family, friends, peers, economic conditions, and life experiences
- Development: Using drugs in earlier stages of life

For help finding proper treatment for you or a loved one, call or text “HOPE” to the Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline at 800-327-5050.⁵³

- Additionally, you can find more information by clicking [here](#) or typing <https://helpline.ma.org/> into your web browser.



Experiencing Grief

According to the American Psychological Association, grief is “the anguish experienced after significant loss, usually the death of a beloved person.”⁵⁴

- This differs from mourning (how we show grief in public) and bereavement (the period of sadness after the death of a loved one).⁵⁵

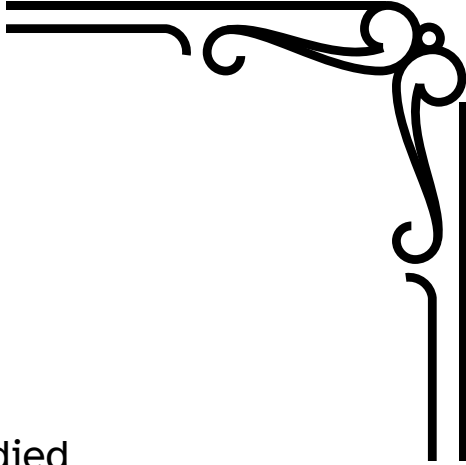
Originally known as the 5 stages of grief, the Kübler-Ross Change Curve® focuses on “encouraging greater awareness, patience, and compassion for the varied ways people respond to loss, uncertainty, and transformation.”⁵⁶

- Shock and Denial: Surprise or shock, looking for evidence that it isn’t true
- Anger and Frustration: Recognition that things are different
- Bargaining and Reflection: Regaining stability, control, or meaning
- Depression or Sadness: Low mood, lacking in energy
- Acceptance and Integration: Changes integrated; a renewed individual

These are emotional response stages associated with experiencing significant transitions, rather than steps of a process.

- Movement throughout is not linear, and stages may intersect or repeat.

For information on grief support groups, refer to the “Peer Support” section.



Child Experiencing Grief by the Imagine Project⁵⁷

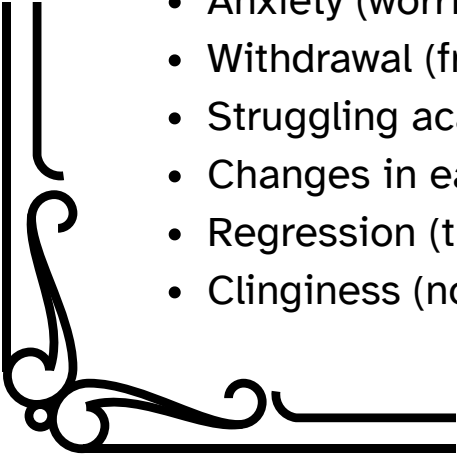
Children's Perceptions of Grief

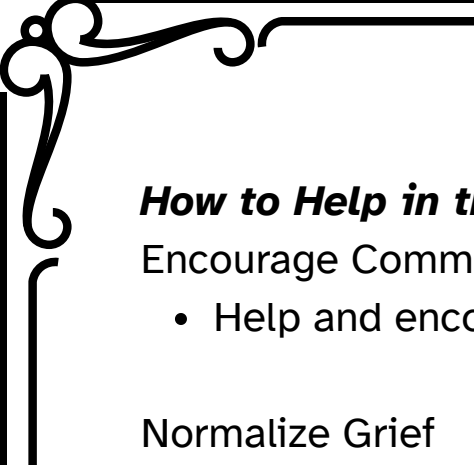
- Preschool
 - May think of death as temporary or reversible
 - May continue to look for the person who has died
- School-age
 - May start to understand that death is permanent
 - May become anxious about others dying
 - May not want to be separated from caregivers
- Teenagers
 - May have a better understanding of death as a natural part of life
 - May become interested in the meaning of life and death

It is important to support children in dealing with their grief in a healthy way.

- Children can learn essential coping skills to carry with them for handling future losses.
- It helps them understand that being sad is normal.

Reactions/Behaviors of Grieving Children

- Sadness (crying one moment, maybe playing the next)
 - Anger (irritable or easily irritated)
 - Denial
 - Anxiety (worried about the safety of themselves and others)
 - Withdrawal (from friends, family, or social activities)
 - Struggling academically (or difficulty concentrating)
 - Changes in eating habits or appetite
 - Regression (thumb-sucking or bedwetting)
 - Clinginess (not wanting to be separated from caregivers)
- 



How to Help in the Grief Process

Encourage Communication

- Help and encourage children to label their thoughts and feelings

Normalize Grief

- Validate feelings of grief and explain how it is normal
- Consider expressing your grief in front of your child to help them feel less alone in their grief

Teach Coping Skills

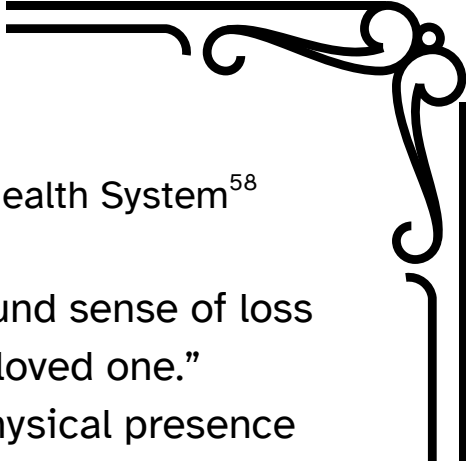
- Model and teach children how to participate in an activity they enjoy when they are sad
- Practice gratitude
- Dance it out
- Create opportunities for relief/regulation (stress ball, art supplies, storybooks)

Promote Self-Care

- Prioritize sleep
- Engage in relaxing activities
- Eat healthy

Seek Professional Help

- If grief symptoms worsen over time
- If there is prolonged depression or loss of interest in preferred activities
- If they have expressed desire to join the person who died
- If there are substance use concerns
- If they refuse to go to school or spend time with friends
- If there is prolonged regression to younger behavior



Grieving Someone Who Is Still Alive by Mayo Clinic Health System⁵⁸

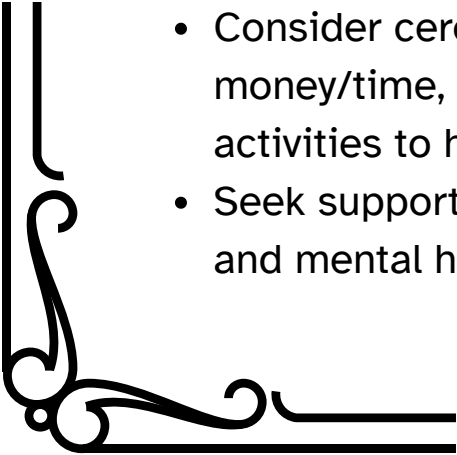
This is often known as ambiguous loss, or the “profound sense of loss and sadness that is not associated with a death of a loved one.”

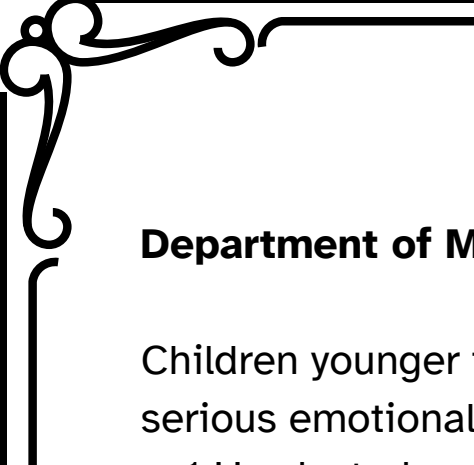
- Loss of emotional connection when a person’s physical presence remains
- Loss of physical connection when emotional connection remains

Types of Ambiguous Loss

- Goodbye without leaving
 - The person is alive but not emotionally or relationally part of your life (divorce, estrangement, incarceration, dementia, moving to a new country)
- Leaving without a goodbye
 - The person is gone, though it is unclear if they are dead or alive (missing person, abandonment)
- Situational goodbye
 - Relationships change due to situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, or political unrest

Ways to Cope

- Identify your loss: Write down all of the things that have changed, or that you anticipate will change as a result of your loss
 - Recognize multiple emotions: You can feel sad and also relieved
 - Don’t compare: Experiences of grief are different for everyone
 - Consider ceremonies: Write a letter, plant a tree, donate money/time, host a ceremony, or engage in other meaningful activities to help with gaining closure
 - Seek support: Family, friends, social support, faith-based groups, and mental health counselors
- 



Mental Health Resources

Department of Mental Health (DMH)⁵⁹

Children younger than 22 can receive DMH services if they have a serious emotional disturbance that:

1. Has lasted, or is expected to last, at least one year
2. Has resulted in functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits the child's role or functioning in family, school, or community activities
3. Meets diagnostic criteria specified within the DSM
 - a. The diagnosis cannot be solely considered a developmental or cognitive disorder, a mental disorder due to a general medical condition, or a substance-related disorder

Through DMH, adults 22 and older can receive services if they meet the criteria for one of the following diagnoses:⁶⁰

- Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders
- Bipolar and Depressive Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Dissociative Disorders
- Feeding and Eating Disorders
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive and Related Disorders
- Trauma and Stressor-Related Disorders

For information on how to apply for DMH services, click [here](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/am-i-eligible-for-dmh-services) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/am-i-eligible-for-dmh-services> into your web browser.

- To connect to other mental health services, click [here](https://www.mass.gov/lists/talk-to-someone-who-can-help-you-navigate-services-across-state-agencies) or type <https://www.mass.gov/lists/talk-to-someone-who-can-help-you-navigate-services-across-state-agencies> into your web browser.



Greater Massachusetts Special Needs Events⁶¹

This is a website created by a parent who wanted a collective resource providing information on programs and services available to their son with autism across Massachusetts.

On the website, there are various events posted focused on the mental health of individuals with disabilities, including:

- Supporting siblings of youth with autism, developmental disabilities, and mental health needs
- Healthy relationships program for autistic adults ages 18+
- Mental health IEP
- Family-to-family mental health support
- Epilepsy teen advocacy program

There are many in-person and virtual events offered with a wide range of activities, such as:

- Support groups
- Conferences
- Workshops
- Webinars
- Celebrations
- Trainings
- And more!

To learn more about the programs for supporting the mental health of individuals with disabilities and their families, click [here](https://spedchildmass.com/mental-health-events-programs-in-massachusetts/) or type <https://spedchildmass.com/mental-health-events-programs-in-massachusetts/>



Legal Resources

This section covers the differences between guardianship and adoption. Additionally, there are several resources for families to access legal advice and support. Estate planning is also discussed in this section as it is important for grandparents to start thinking about planning for the future.

Legal Information

Guardianship Versus Adoption

Guardianship

“A guardian of a minor is someone who a court appoints to care for a child in place of a parent. A guardian is in charge of a child's support, care, education, health, and welfare.”⁶²

There are two types of guardianship:

- Temporary Guardianship
- Permanent Guardianship

Temporary guardians are appointed by the court for up to 90 days at a time, while permanent guardians are appointed until the child turns 18.

- A child who is 14 years or older must agree to the guardianship.
- The court can extend temporary guardianships after the first order ends.

A guardianship does *not* automatically terminate someone's parental rights.

- Birth parents may request visitation through the court, but if there is no court-ordered schedule, visitation is left to the legal guardian's discretion.

It is important to note that “anyone, including a parent, may petition the court to remove a guardian or terminate a guardianship if they can show a substantial and material change in circumstances and it is in the child's best interest.”⁶³

- Permanent guardianship may be removed before the child turns 18 if the court makes a different order.

Adoption

“When a child is adopted, the adoption is forever. During the adoption hearing, you may request a change in the child’s name. A new birth certificate and a new Social Security card may be issued, removing the biological parents’ names and listing the adoptive parent(s) as the child’s parent(s).”⁶⁴

Adoption is truly permanent unless it is terminated by the court as a result of the adoptive parents being deemed unfit, similarly to how biological parents’ rights are terminated due to abuse or neglect.

- A child who is 12 years or older must agree to the adoption.
- Adoption *does* terminate the parental rights of birth parents.

In some circumstances, birth and adoptive parents may sign an Open Adoption Agreement.

- This outlines the birth parents’ frequency of future contact with their child.
- This may be established by the court if they think it is in the best interest of the child to have contact with their birth parent(s).
- If there is no court-ordered schedule, visitation is left to the adoptive parents’ discretion.

Once a child is adopted, their biological parents are no longer responsible for child support payments.

It is important to consider the differences in guardianship and adoption when petitioning the court to determine what works best for you and your family.

- If there is a plan for reunification of the child with their birth parent(s), guardianship may be the best option.

Legal Resources

Lawyer for the Day (LFD)⁶⁵

Across Massachusetts, this program has volunteer lawyers who spend the day assisting people with their cases.

Services may include:

- Giving you basic legal advice and help with strategy
- Helping you identify and fill out court forms
- Answering questions about your case (ex: “What evidence do I need?”)
- Discussing legal options
- Helping you determine next steps
- Explaining court processes
- Helping you understand laws, legal resources, and information
- Giving you information about community services and resources
- Representing you in mediation or in front of the judge

To find Lawyer for the Day programs, click [here](#), or type www.mass.gov/resource/search-for-volunteer-lawyers-at-your-court into your web browser.

- Family-related matters are handled by the Probate and Family Court.
- Scroll down to the table of contents, click on the Probate and Family Court drop-down, and look for programs in your area.
- Additionally, you can contact the court where your case is being heard, and they may be able to help you find a LFD Program.

Refer to a specific Lawyer for the Day program for more information on services provided, dates and times, location, eligibility requirements, in-person or virtual options, and whether you need to sign up in advance.

Dial-A-Lawyer⁶⁶

The Massachusetts Bar Association (MBA) offers a monthly service where individuals can call in to their hotline to receive free legal advice.

Topics that the volunteer attorneys can answer questions about include, but are not limited to:

- Family law
- Bankruptcy
- Real estate
- Consumer rights

The Dial-A-Lawyer program takes place on the first Wednesday of each month between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

To verify that the MBA is hosting the Dial-A-Lawyer program at the beginning of a particular month, click [here](#) or type “Mass Bar Calendar of Events” into your web browser to access their calendar of events.

To call when a Dial-A-Lawyer event is being hosted, dial 617-338-0610 or 877-686-0711

It is important to note that the Dial-A-Lawyer program does not limit the number of calls an individual makes or the number of times they call within a year.

For additional information about the Massachusetts Bar Association’s public and community services, click [here](#) or type <https://www.massbar.org/public> into your web browser.

Volunteer Lawyers Project⁶⁷

The Volunteer Lawyers Project is an organization of the Boston Bar Association that serves lower-income individuals and households within the Greater Boston Area.

The organization serves 69 towns. To see if your town is included, click [here](#) or type <https://vlpnet.org/get-help/> into your web browser.

- Scroll down to FAQs For Clients
- Click on the “What town do you live in?” drop-down

Those who are seeking services must meet the following financial guidelines:

Financial Guidelines - 200% of Federal Poverty Level Guidelines

Family Size	Maximum Adjusted Gross Income
1	\$31,920
2	\$43,280
3	\$54,640
4	\$66,000
5	\$77,360
Each Additional	Add \$11,360

Adjusted Gross Income: The family’s total annual income before taxes, minus allowable medical expenses and other deductions

The organization provides legal help, information, and advice on various legal problems, including civil appeals, consumer/bankruptcy, employment, housing, probate, and family law and guardianship.

If you are looking for Family Law and Guardianship assistance, the Volunteer Lawyers Project provides support for areas including:

- Guardianship of a disabled adult child over 18
- Family members seeking guardianship of minor children whose parents are unavailable
- Modifications of child support and custody
- Child support
- Child custody
- Paternity
- Divorce
- Court cases for restraining orders in an abusive relationship

To apply for their legal services, click [here](#), type <https://vlpnet.org/get-help/> into your browser, or call 617-603-1700.

- You need an email address and a phone number to complete the online application.

If you are calling, call center hours are:

- Monday: 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Tuesday: 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Wednesday: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Thursday: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Friday: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

If you do not meet the financial requirements, the organization may be able to provide referrals.

Mass Legal Help⁶⁸

Mass Legal Help is run by a nonprofit organization to help people better understand their rights regarding noncriminal legal problems in Massachusetts.

The information they provide is written and reviewed by legal aid programs, lawyers, and community partners.

The organization covers many legal topics, such as:

- Children, Families, and Divorce
- School
- Health and Disability Rights
- Public Benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Issues that are covered within the **Children, Families, and Divorce** topic include:

- Divorce and separation
- Child support
- Custody, parenting time, and visitation
- Parentage (paternity)
- Guardians and other caregivers
- Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Youth rights
- The Probate and Family Court
- Alimony
- Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) cases

To access this information, click [here](https://www.masslegalhelp.org/children-families-divorce) or type <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/children-families-divorce> into your web browser.

Issues that are covered within the **School** topic include:

- School discipline
- Special education and disability accommodations
- English language learners
- After high school
- Bullying and safety
- Kids experiencing homelessness

To access this information, click [here](#) or type

<https://www.masslegalhelp.org/school> into your web browser.

Issues that are covered within the **Health and Disability Rights** topic include:

- Health insurance, MassHealth, and Medicare
- Mental Health
- Dental
- Medical Debt
- Disability Rights

To access this information, click [here](#) or type

<https://www.masslegalhelp.org/health-disability-rights> into your web browser.

Issues that are covered within the **Public Benefits and SSI** topic include:

- SNAP and food benefits
- TAFDC
- EAEDC
- Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)
- Veteran benefits
- Social Security and SSI
- Utilities and other benefits

To access this information, click [here](#) or type

<https://www.masslegalhelp.org/public-benefits-ssi> into your web browser.

Massachusetts Legal Resource Finder⁶⁹

The Massachusetts Legal Resource Finder is funded by the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC). MLAC is committed to helping low-income people access legal information, advice, and representation.

To view the programs listed on their website, click [here](https://masslrf.org/en/programs/all) or type <https://masslrf.org/en/programs/all> into your web browser.

While looking at the list of programs, you can use the “Filter Options” to help narrow down your search by:

- Service Type
- Intake Type
- Service Area
- Legal Issues Addressed

For a more personalized list of available programs that may better apply to your situation, use the Legal Resource Finder by clicking [here](https://masslrf.org/en/home) or by typing <https://masslrf.org/en/home> into your web browser.

- To begin, look for the box that says “Start Here”, and indicate that you have a legal problem in Massachusetts
- The website will then ask you to indicate what legal problem you are facing
- Additional questions will be asked to help narrow down the specific topic you need assistance with
- There is a question about your household’s monthly income before taxes, so have this information prepared

Estate Planning by the National Council on Aging⁷⁰

According to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), estate planning is “the process of deciding how your assets and personal wishes will be managed, distributed, or carried out if you become incapacitated or after you pass away.”

- This process is meant to help ensure that your personal, financial, and health care choices are known and prioritized if you are unable to convey them yourself in the future.

An estate plan has three core components:

- Will
- Trust
- Power of Attorney

A **will** is a legal document that specifies who inherits your assets after your death.

- This includes your home, retirement savings, and personal belongings.
- You can also name guardians for minor children, other dependents, and pets.
- With a will, you choose an executor who is responsible for following the instructions you leave.

A will can be updated at any time to accommodate changes to your estate as they occur.

- If you update your will, it is helpful to share it with your executor.

Of note, wills are opened in probate court, making them public record for anyone to view.

- This makes it easier for people to see who may have recently come into money or property.

A **trust** includes legal protection for your assets and guarantees that the choices you made regarding your estate are honored.

- It also avoids probate, reduces taxes, and designates how and when the people named in the trust get their inheritance.

The two main types of trusts are revocable and irrevocable trusts.

- Revocable trusts can be changed or revoked.
- Irrevocable trusts cannot be changed.

Within revocable and irrevocable trusts, there are many other categories into which trusts can be classified, including marital, charitable, and special needs trusts.

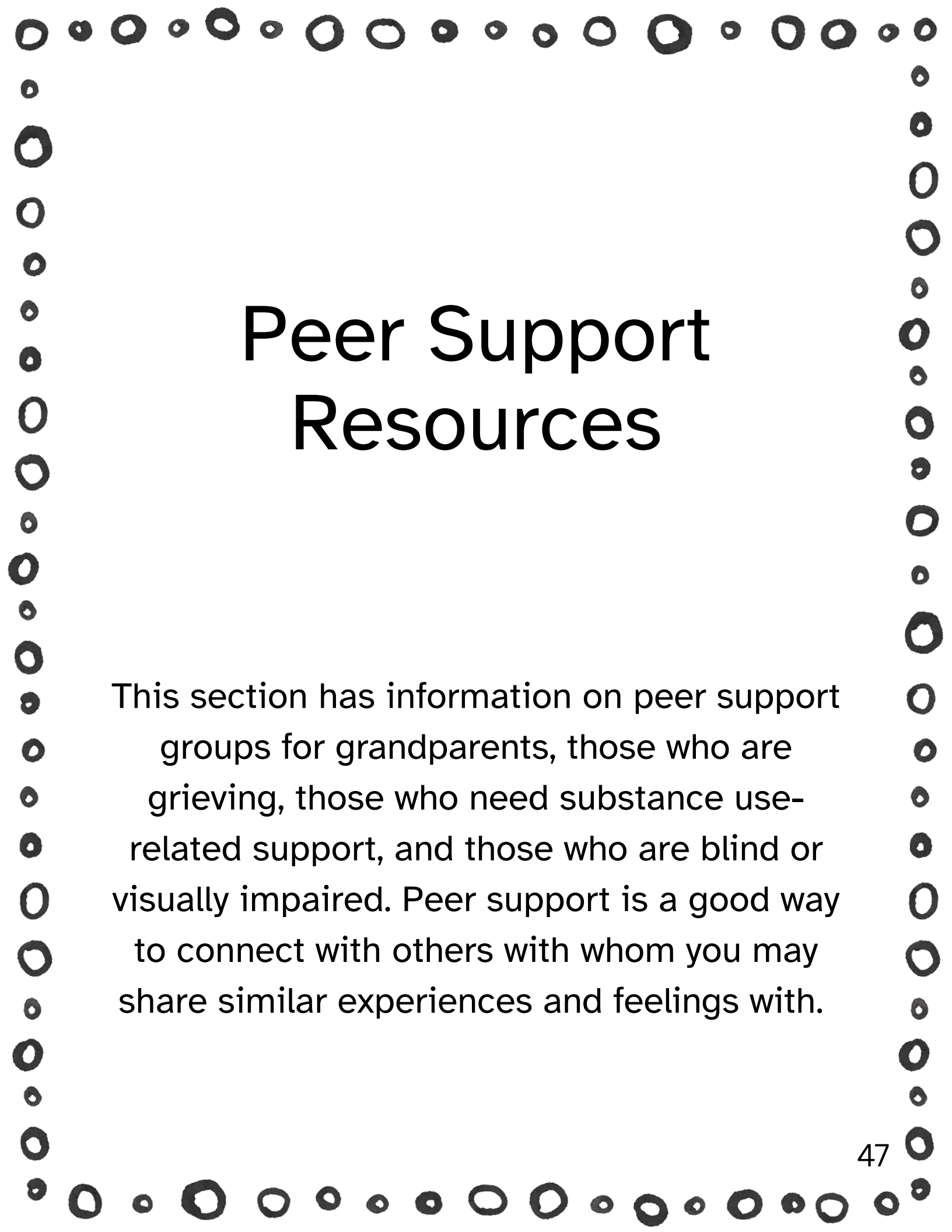
Setting up a trust typically requires the assistance of an estate planning attorney, while wills can be prepared on one's own if desired.

A **power of attorney** (POA) indicates a predetermined person who has been chosen to act as an agent on your behalf.

- General POAs are intended to have authority over financial, legal, and estate-related matters in the short-term.
- Durable POAs have sustained authority in the event you are unable to make your own decisions.
- Healthcare POAs make only medical decisions, not financial or other decisions.

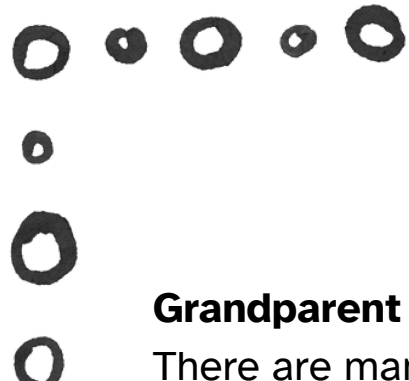
A living will, or advanced health care directive, allows you to document your wishes regarding receiving treatment in case you are unable to convey them yourself when needed.

- This includes your preferences on resuscitation, life support, pain management, and feeding tubes.



Peer Support Resources

This section has information on peer support groups for grandparents, those who are grieving, those who need substance use-related support, and those who are blind or visually impaired. Peer support is a good way to connect with others with whom you may share similar experiences and feelings with.



Peer Support Resources

Grandparent Caregiver Support Groups⁷¹

There are many grandparent support groups throughout Massachusetts.

Locations, meeting times, and contact information can be found on the Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren website.

- Click [here](#) or type <https://massgrg.com/resources/support-groups/> into your web browser.
- Additionally, you can email massgrg@mass.gov for more information or assistance with joining a group

Certain groups offer language translation services. If you are interested, these services may need to be arranged in advance.

- Languages included on the website are Portuguese, Spanish, Cape Verdean, Haitian Creole, and French.
- Refer to the link above for more information on which support groups offer different languages.

Virtual Opportunities

The website also includes several virtual support groups that are available.

- Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) for grandparents raising grandchildren with mental health needs
- Eliot Community Human Services for grandparents raising grandchildren with trauma
- Support After a Death by Overdose Organization for grandparents and kin who have lost a child to overdose

Grief Support

Hope Health⁷² (Virtual Support for MA and RI Residents)

- General Grief Support Groups
 - LGBTQ+ Grief Support Group
 - Young Adult Grief Support Group (for ages 18-35)
 - Children and Teens Grief Support Group (for ages 6 to 17)
- Loss of Spouse/Life Partner Support Group
- Loss of Parent Support Groups
 - General
 - Young Adult (ages 18-35)
- Loss of a Child Support Groups
 - Young child
 - Adult child

Registration is required for participation in the support groups. Please fill out the interest form provided on the Hope Health website.

- The interest form can be found by clicking [here](https://www.hopehealthco.org/services/hospice-care/grief-support/find-a-grief-support-group/) or by typing <https://www.hopehealthco.org/services/hospice-care/grief-support/find-a-grief-support-group/> into your web browser.

The Children's Room⁷³ (Arlington, MA/Virtual Support)

- Offers in-person groups for children and teens ages 3½ to 18.
- Offers in-person and virtual support groups for adults

In order for The Children's House to connect you with the appropriate team member and match you to an ongoing group, fill out their contact form.

- You can find it by clicking [here](https://childrensroom.org/contact-us/) or by typing <https://childrensroom.org/contact-us/> into your web browser.

Jeff's Place⁷⁴ (Framingham, MA/Virtual Support)

- Parent/Caregiver Loss Group (ages 7-18)
 - Children/teens who have experienced a meaningful loss meet while caregivers meet in their own support group
- After School Group (ages 3.5-12)
 - Uses art, books, and play to explore and express feelings
 - Children meet while caregivers meet in their own group
- Sibling/Child Loss Group (ages 3.5-18)
 - For families that have experienced the death of a child/sibling
 - Children/teens meet while caregivers meet in their own group
- Young Adult Group (ages 18-30)
 - Young adults who have experienced a meaningful loss meet
- Grandparent Grief Support Group
 - For grandparents who are supporting grieving grandchildren

To apply for participation in grief support groups for families and children, click [here](#) or type <https://www.jeffsplace.org/grief-support-application/> into your web browser.

To apply for participation in the grief support group for young adults, click [here](#) or type <https://www.jeffsplace.org/young-adult-application/> into your web browser.

To apply for participation in the grandparent support group, click [here](#) or type <https://www.jeffsplace.org/grandparent-grief-support-group/>

Jeff's Place also provides other resources and services to support families and providers dealing with grief and loss.

- To learn more and review their resources and services, click [here](#) or type <https://www.jeffsplace.org/> into your web browser.

The Sun Will Rise Foundation⁷⁵ (In-person/virtual)

Provides peer grief support groups to those 18 and older who have experienced the death of a loved one due to substance use-related causes.

There are many specialty groups offered, including:

- Men
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Partners/spouses
- Siblings
- Multiple losses
- Newly bereaved
- LGBTQ+ community
- People in recovery
- Young adults (18-35)
- Substance use-related suicide loss

To find dates, times, and locations for the various groups, click [here](#) or type <https://www.thesunwillrise.org/meetingcalendar> into your web browser.

Before attending a group, The Sun Will Rise Foundation asks that you complete a one-time pre-registration form, which will add you to their email list. The form can be found by clicking [here](#) or typing <https://www.thesunwillrise.org/grief-group-pre-registration> into your web browser.

- Once you receive an email confirmation, you can attend any group.
- Additional emails are sent weekly on Sundays with group Zoom links.

Substance Use Peer Support

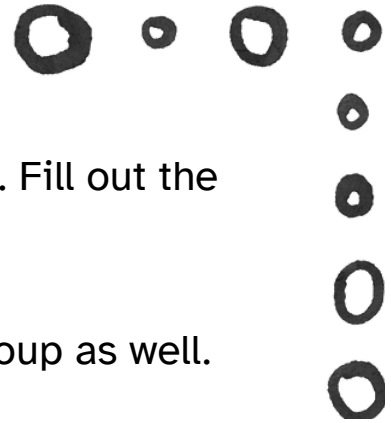
Peer Recovery Support Centers (PRSC)⁷⁶

Through the Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services, PRSCs offer free support to individuals in substance use recovery and their loved ones.

To find a Peer Recovery Support Center near you and learn more about accessing their peer support services and contact info, click [here](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/peer-recovery-support-centers) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/peer-recovery-support-centers> into your web browser.

Learn to Cope (LTC)⁷⁷ (In-Person, Virtual, or Hybrid Support)

- Sibling Support Groups
 - For those with a sibling struggling with substance use disorder
- Peer Recovery Support
 - For individuals in recovery from substance use
- Shoulder-to-Shoulder Group
 - For men
- LTC Remembers Grief Group
 - For those who have lost a loved one to substance use disorder
- LTC Español Group
 - For Spanish-speaking families with a loved one struggling with substance use disorder
- Still Learning Still Coping Group
 - For families who have lost a loved one to substance use disorder, yet still have a loved one struggling.



Zoom information for virtual groups is not publicly posted. Fill out the *Stay Connected* form by clicking [here](#) or by typing <https://learn2cope.org/calendar/> into your web browser.

- Use the link to see the times and locations of each group as well.

Learn to Cope also has a discussion forum for families and friends of those who are impacted by substance use disorder to share and learn about various resources and supports.

- To register for the forum, click [here](#) or type <https://learn2cope.org/forum-ltc/> into your web browser.

Support for the Blind or Visually Impaired⁷⁸

The Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI) has many support groups throughout Massachusetts.

- Groups typically meet once a month and provide a space for participants to discuss their experiences of vision loss. Members often share tips, coping strategies, and resources with each other.

Support group locations include:

Braintree, Brockton, Brookline, Canton, Concord, Dorchester, Easthampton, Framingham, Franklin, Gloucester, Greenfield, Haverhill, Hingham, Jamaica Plain, Marlborough, Medford, Middleborough, Montachusett, Natick, Needham, New Bedford Elders, Newburyport, Newton, Northborough, Peabody, Plymouth, Quincy, Reading, Sharon/Stoughton, South Hadley, Springfield, Sudbury, Taunton, Watertown, Winthrop, and Worcester

To learn more about the support groups and virtual options, call MABVI at (888) 613-2777 or email them at

mabvi@mabcommunity.org

- Click [here](#) or type <https://www.mabvi.org/services/support-groups/> into your web browser to find additional information on the support groups.

Children's Development

This section has information about child development and tips you can use to support your grandchild as they age. Additionally, if you have concerns about your grandchild's development, there are resources on services to seek out for your grandchild.

Children's Development

The information presented is adapted for grandparent caregivers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Developmental Milestones Materials⁷⁹

In this section, we discuss:

Developmental Milestones

Social/Emotional

Language/Communication

Cognitive

Movement/Physical Development

Resources for Suspected Developmental Delays

Early Intervention

Preschool Special Education

Tips and Activities

Ways to support learning and brain development

The milestones are based on Western cultural contexts. Development expectations and caregiving practices may differ across cultures.

Ages:

2 months

4 months

6 months

9 months

15 months

18 months

2 years

30 months

3 years

4 years

5 years

	2 months	4 months
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Calms down when spoken to or picked up • Looks at your face • Seems happy to see you when you walk up to them • Smiles when you talk to or smile at them	• Smiles on their own to get your attention • Chuckles (not yet a full laugh) when you try to make them laugh • Looks at you, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Makes sounds other than crying • Reacts to loud sounds	• Makes sounds like “oooo”, “aahh” (cooing) • Makes sounds back when you talk to them • Turns head towards the sound of your voice
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Watches you as you move • Looks at a toy for several seconds	• If hungry, opens mouth when they see a breast or a bottle • Looks at their hands with interest
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Holds head up when on tummy • Moves both arms and both legs • Opens hands briefly	• Holds head steady without support when you are holding them • Holds a toy when you put it in their hand • Uses their arm to swing at toys • Brings hands to mouth • Pushes up onto elbows/forearms when on tummy

	6 months	9 months
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Knows familiar people • Likes to look at themselves in a mirror • Laughs	• Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers • Shows several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, and surprised • Looks when you call their name • Reacts when you leave (looks, reaches for you, or cries) • Smiles or laughs when you play peek-a-boo
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Takes turns making sounds with you • Blows “raspberries” (sticks tongue out and blows) • Makes squealing noises	• Makes different sounds like “babababa.” • Lifts arms up to be picked up
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Puts things in their mouth to explore them • Reaches to grab a toy they want • Closes lips to show they don’t want more food	• Looks for objects when dropped out of sight (like a spoon or toy) • Bangs two things together
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Rolls from tummy to back • Pushes up with straight arms when on tummy • Leans on hands to support themselves when sitting	• Gets to sitting position by themselves • Moves things from one hand to the other hand • Uses fingers to “rake” food towards themselves • Sits without support

	15 months
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does • Shows you an object they like • Claps when excited • Hugs stuffed doll or other toy • Shows you affection (hugs, cuddles, or kisses you)
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Tries to say one to two words like “ba” for ball or “da” for dog • Looks at a familiar object when you name it • Follows directions given with both a gesture and words. For example, they give you a toy when you hold out your hand and say, “Give me the toy.” • Points to ask for something or to get help
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Tries to use things the right way, like a phone, a cup, or a book • Stacks at least 2 small objects, like blocks
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Takes a few steps on their own • Uses fingers to feed themselves some food

	18 months
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Moves away from you, but looks to make sure you are close by • Points to show you something interesting • Puts their hands out for you to wash them • Looks at a few pages in a book with you • Helps you dress them by pushing their arm through a sleeve or lifting up their foot
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Tries to say three or more words • Follows one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you the toy when you say, "Give it to me."
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom • Plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Walks without holding on to anyone or anything • Scribbles • Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes • Feeds themselves with their fingers • Tries to use a spoon • Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help

	2 years
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying • Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Points to things in a book when you ask, like “Where is the bear?” • Says at least two words together, like “More milk.” • Points to at least two body parts when you ask them to show you • Uses more gestures than just waving or pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Holds something in one hand while using the other hand; for example, holding a container and taking the lid off • Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy • Plays with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Kicks a ball • Runs • Walks (not climbs) up a few stairs with or without help • Eats with a spoon

	30 months
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Plays next to other children and sometimes plays with them • Shows you what they can do by saying, "Look at me!" • Follows simple routines when told, like helping to pick up toys when you say, "It's clean-up time."
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Says about 50 words • Says two or more words together, with one action word, like "Doggie run." • Names things in a book when you point and ask, "What is this?" • Says words like "I," "me," or "we."
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Uses things to pretend, like feeding a block to a doll as if it were food • Shows simple problem-solving skills, like standing on a small stool to reach something • Follows two-step instructions like "Put the toy down and close the door." • Shows they know at least one color, like pointing to a red crayon when you ask, "Which one is red?"
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Uses hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids • Takes some clothes off by themselves, like loose pants or an open jacket. • Jumps off the ground with both feet • Turns book pages, one at a time, when you read to them

	3 years
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave them, like at a childcare drop-off • Notices other children and joins them to play
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges • Asks, “who,” “what,” “where,” or “why” questions • Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like “running,” “eating,” or “playing.” • Says first name when asked • Talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Draws a circle when you show them how • Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn them
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni • Puts on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or a jacket • Uses a fork

	4 years
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Pretends to be something else during play (teacher, superhero, dog) • Asks to go play with children if none are around, like “Can I play with Alex?” • Comforts others who are hurt or sad, like hugging a crying friend • Avoids danger, like not jumping from tall heights at the playground • Changes behavior based on where they are (place of worship, library, playground)
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Says sentences with four or more words • Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme • Talks about at least one thing that happened during the day, like “I played soccer.” • Answers simple questions like “What is a coat for?” or “What is a crayon for?”
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Names a few colors of items • Tells what comes next in a well-known story • Draws a person with three or more body parts
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Catches a large ball most of the time • Serves themselves food or pours water, with adult supervision • Unbuttons some buttons • Holds crayon/pencil between fingers and thumb (not fist)

	5 years
Social/ Emotional Milestones	• Follows rules or takes turns when playing games with other children • Sings, dances, or acts for you • Does simple chores at home, like matching socks or cleaning the table after eating
Language/ Communication Milestones	• Tells a story they heard or made up with at least two events. For example, a cat was stuck in a tree, and a firefighter saved it • Answers simple questions about a book or story after you read or tell it to them • Keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges • Uses or recognizes simple rhymes (bat-cat, ball-tall)
Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem- solving)	• Counts to 10 • Names some numbers between 1 and 5 when you point to them • Uses words about time, like “yesterday,” tomorrow,” “morning,” or “night.” • Pays attention for 5 to 10 minutes during activities. For example, during story time or making arts and crafts (screen time does not count) • Writes some letters in their name • Names some letters when you point to them
Movement/ Physical Development Milestones	• Buttons some buttons • Hops on one foot

What Do I Do If My Grandchild Is Not Meeting These Milestones?

If your grandchild is not meeting their age-appropriate milestones or has lost skills that they previously had, you can:

- Talk to your grandchild's doctor about your concerns
- Ask the doctor about developmental screening or for a referral to a specialist
- Look into early intervention services for your grandchild

What Is Early Intervention?

Early intervention programs are for children ages 0 to 3 who are not meeting their developmental milestones or are at risk of not doing so.

A doctor's referral is **not** required to access early intervention services, and there are **no** out-of-pocket costs for your grandchild to participate.

If your grandchild is eligible for early intervention, their services may include:

- Speech Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy

To find early intervention services near you, click [here](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ei-program-contact-information), or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ei-program-contact-information> into your web browser.

If your grandchild is three years or older, call a local public elementary school and ask how your grandchild can be evaluated for preschool special education services

- It does not have to be a school that your grandchild attends
- Ask to speak with the special education director if the person you are speaking with is unfamiliar with preschool special education

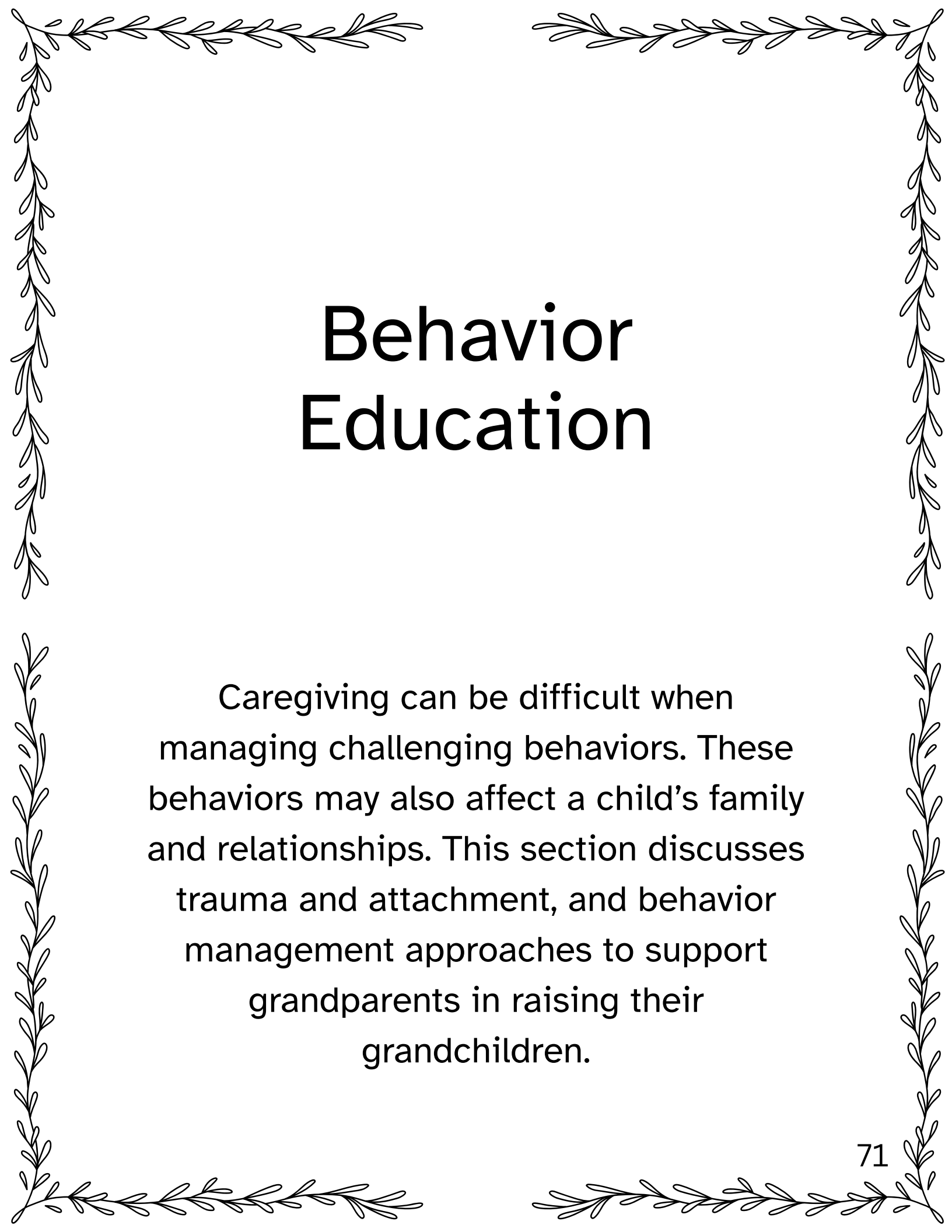
Caregiving Tips and Activities to Support Your Grandchild's Development

2 months	• Respond positively to your grandchild. Act excited, smile, and talk to them when they make sounds. This teaches them to take turns “talking” back and forth in conversation. • Talk, read, and sing to your grandchild to help them develop and understand language. • Spend time cuddling and holding your grandchild. This will help them feel safe and cared for.
4 months	• Provide safe opportunities for your grandchild to reach for toys, kick at toys, and explore what is around them. For example, put them on a blanket with safe toys. • Allow your grandchild to put safe things in their mouth to explore them. This is how babies learn. For example, let them see, hear, and touch things that are not sharp, hot, or small enough to choke on.
6 months	• Use “back and forth” play with your grandchild. When your grandchild smiles, you smile; when they make sounds, you copy them. This helps them learn to be social. • “Read” to your grandchild every day by looking at and talking about colorful pictures in magazines or books. Respond to them when they babble and “read” too. For example, if they make a sound, say “Yes, that’s the doggy!” • Point out new things to your grandchild and name them. For example, when on a walk, point out cars, trees, and animals.

9 months	• Repeat your grandchild's sounds and say simple words using those sounds. For example, if your grandchild says "bababa," repeat "bababa," then say "book." • Place toys on the ground or on a play mat a little out of reach and encourage your grandchild to crawl, scoot, or roll to get them. Celebrate when they reach the toys. • Teach your grandchild to wave "bye-bye" or shake their head "no." For example, wave and say "bye-bye" when leaving.
1 year	• Teach your grandchild "wanted behaviors." Show them what to do and use positive words, or give them hugs and kisses when they do it. For example, if they pull your pet's tail, teach them to pet gently and give them a hug when they do. • Talk or sing to your grandchild about what you're doing. For example, say "This is the way we wash our hands." • Build on what they try to say. If they say "ta," say "Yes, a truck," or if they say "truck," say "Yes, that's a big, blue truck."
15 months	• Help your grandchild learn to speak. A child's early words are not complete. Repeat and add to what they say. They may say "ba" for ball, and you can say, "Ball, yes, that's a ball." • Tell your grandchild the names of objects when they point to them, and wait a few seconds to see if they make any sounds before handing it to them. If they do make a sound, acknowledge and repeat the name of the object. "Yes! Cup." • Find ways to let your grandchild help with everyday activities. Let them get their shoes to go outside, put the snacks in the bag for the park, or put the socks in the basket.

18 months	• Use positive words and give more attention to behaviors you want to see (“wanted behaviors”). For example, “Look how nicely you put the toy away.” Give less attention to those you don’t want to see. • Encourage “pretend” play. Give your grandchild a spoon so they can pretend to feed their stuffed animal. Take turns pretending. • Help your grandchild learn about others’ feelings and about positive ways to react. For example, when they see a child who is sad, say “He looks sad. Let’s bring him a teddy.”
2 years	• Help your grandchild learn how words sound, even if they can't say them clearly yet. For example, if your grandchild says, "or nana," say, "You want more banana." • Watch your grandchild closely during playdates. Children this age play next to each other, but do not know how to share and solve problems. Show your grandchild how to deal with conflicts by helping them share, take turns, and use words when possible. • Have your grandchild help you get ready for mealtime by letting them carry things to the table, such as plastic cups or napkins. Thank your grandchild for helping.
30 months	• Encourage “free play,” where your grandchild can follow their interests, try new things, and use things in new ways. • Use positive words and give more attention to behaviors you want to see (“wanted behaviors”) than to those you don’t want to see. For example, say “I like how you gave Jordan the toy.” • Give your grandchild food choices that are simple and healthy. Let them choose what to eat for a snack or what to wear. Limit choices to two or three.

3 years	• Encourage your grandchild to solve their own problems with your support. Ask questions to help them understand the problem. Help them think of solutions, try one out, and try more if needed. • Talk about your grandchild's emotions and give them words to help them explain how they're feeling. Help your grandchild manage stressful feelings by teaching them to take deep breaths, hug a favorite toy, or go to a quiet, safe place when they're upset. • Set a few simple and clear rules that your grandchild can follow, such as use gentle hands when playing. If they break a rule, show them what to do instead. Later, if your grandchild follows the rule, recognize and congratulate them.
4 years	• Help your grandchild be ready for new places and meeting new people. For example, you can read stories or role play (pretend play) to help them be comfortable. • Read with your grandchild. Ask them what's happening in the story and what they think might happen next. • Help your grandchild learn about colors, shapes, and sizes. For example, ask about the color, shapes, and sizes of things they see during the day.
5 years	• Your grandchild might start to "talk back" to feel independent and to test what happens. Limit the attention you give to the negative words. Find alternative activities that let them take the lead and be independent. Make a point of noticing good behavior. "You stayed calm when I told you it's bedtime." • Ask your grandchild what they are playing. Help them expand their answers by asking "Why?" and "How?" For example, say "That's a nice bridge you're building. Why did you put it there?" • Play with toys that encourage your grandchild to put things together, such as puzzles and building blocks.

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Behavior Education

Caregiving can be difficult when managing challenging behaviors. These behaviors may also affect a child's family and relationships. This section discusses trauma and attachment, and behavior management approaches to support grandparents in raising their grandchildren.



Behavior Education

Attachment, Trauma, and Managing Behaviors

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)® is a model designed by the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development to support caregivers of children who have experienced disruption.⁸⁰

- It focuses on attachment and uses a trauma-informed approach.
- It works to address behavioral, emotional, and relational problems.

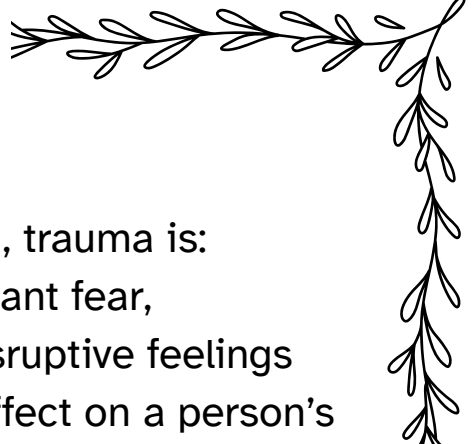
Behavior is a form of communication. It is influenced by biological, psychological, and environmental factors, including genetics, physical and mental health, and culture. It is important to consider the needs children express through their behavior and how we can best meet them.

What is Attachment?

Attachment is an important part of the relationship between a child and a caregiver, and it influences a child's future relationships.⁸¹

- Attachment describes how a caregiver helps a child feel safe by making sure their needs are consistently met.⁸²
- When there is positive attachment, a caregiver is a base that a child feels comfortable leaving to explore the world. Throughout, the caregiver is available to provide comfort and safety when needed.⁸³

To watch how the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development explains attachment, click [here](#) or search “TBRI Animate: Attachment” on YouTube.



What is Trauma?

According to the American Psychological Association, trauma is:

- “Any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person’s attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning”.⁸⁴

TBRI® discusses the effects trauma has on people through the 5 B’s.

Trauma can impact a person’s:

- Brain
- Biology
- Body
- Behavior
- Beliefs

To learn about how the 5 B’s are impacted by trauma, click [here](https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/The-5-Bs-of-Relational-Trauma-Handout.pdf) or type <https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/The-5-Bs-of-Relational-Trauma-Handout.pdf>

Trauma-Wise Care⁸⁵

Trauma-Wise Care, by Howard Bath, has 3 pillars that can be used by those caring for children affected by trauma to support their healing.

The 3 pillars are:

- Safety (feeling safe within the environment)
- Connection (healthy relationships with others)
- Coping (having the ability to manage emotions)

TBRI® uses these 3 pillars to inform its 3 core principles: Empowering, Connecting, and Correcting.

- Resources for the 3 principles are on the next page.



Empowering

- Keep a safe environment
- Make sure bodily needs are met (hunger, thirst, sleep, etc.)

Connecting

- Use eye contact, playfulness, and appropriate touch
- Support self-regulation and problem solving

Correcting

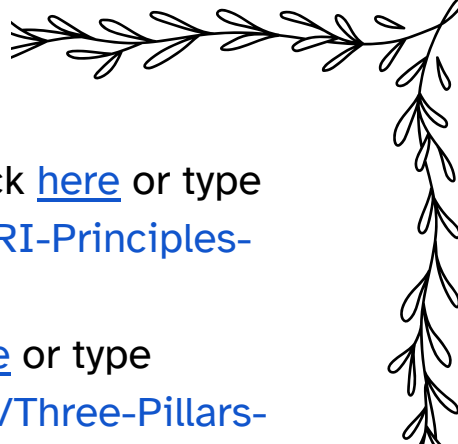
- Use Life Value Terms (quick, simple phrases)
- Use IDEAL Responses and Levels of Response

For details on Life Value Terms, click [here](https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Life-Value-Terms-Handout.pdf) or type <https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Life-Value-Terms-Handout.pdf> into your web browser.

For details on IDEAL Responses, click [here](https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/IDEAL-Response-Handout.pdf) or type <https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/IDEAL-Response-Handout.pdf> into your web browser.

For details on the Levels of Response, click [here](https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Levels-of-Response-Handout.pdf) or type <https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Levels-of-Response-Handout.pdf> into your web browser.

To watch how the Karyn Purvis Institute on Child Development explains IDEAL Responses and the Levels of Response, click [here](#) or search “TBRI Animate: The IDEAL Response” on YouTube.



For additional details about the 3 core principles, click [here](#) or type <https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/TBRI-Principles-Strategies-Practices.pdf> into your web browser.

- To see how they use Trauma-Wise Care, click [here](#) or type <https://child.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Three-Pillars-Handout.pdf> into your web browser.

For TBRI caregiver resources, click [here](#) or type <https://child.tcu.edu/caregivers-and-parents/> into your web browser.

- For a brief overview of TBRI®, click [here](#) or search “TBRI: Trust-Based Relational Intervention” on YouTube.

For more information about TBRI® and its principles, read Child Bridge’s Crash Course.

- You can find their website by clicking [here](#) or by typing <https://www.childbridgemontana.org/blog/tbri-crash-course> into your web browser.



Sensory Needs

In TBRI's® Empowering Principle, meeting bodily needs is discussed. An example of meeting a child's bodily needs includes their sensory needs.⁸⁶

The 5 commonly known senses are touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound, though there are 3 other senses within our bodies.⁸⁷

- Proprioception
- Interoception
- Vestibular

Proprioception: Helps you know where your body is in space.

- Walking up the stairs without looking at your feet.
- Controlling how much strength you need to pick up a milk jug.

Interoception: Helps you know what is happening inside of your body.

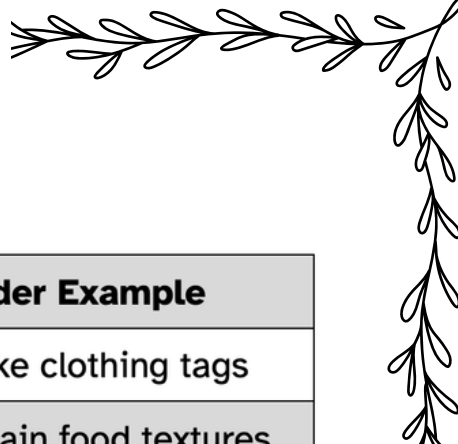
- Feeling when you are hungry or thirsty.
- Feeling when you are tired or in pain.

Vestibular Sense: Helps your body balance, know which way is up, and know which direction it is moving in.

- Knowing when you are going up or down in an elevator.
- Balancing on a skateboard as you are riding it.

People may present with sensitivities to one or more senses.⁸⁸

- Sensory avoidance (hypersensitivity): Individuals may perceive sensations more intensely, leading them to avoid them.
- Sensory seeking (hyposensitivity): Individuals may need more input to perceive sensations, leading them to look for more sensory input.



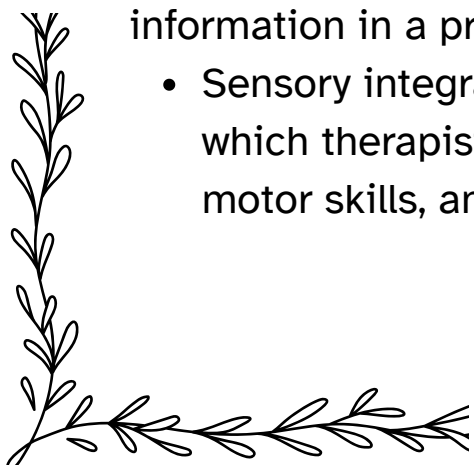
Twenty-One Senses Sensory Examples⁸⁷

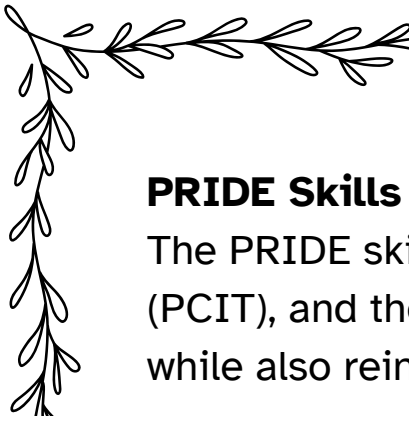
	Seeker Example	Avoider Example
Touch	Likes specific textures	Does not like clothing tags
Taste	Puts inedible things in their mouth	Avoids certain food textures
Smell	Smells everything	Sensitive to smells
Sight	Likes bright toys	Likes dark environments
Sound	Yells a lot	Likes quiet environments
Proprioception	Plays rough	Does not like hugs
Interoception	Doesn't realize when they need to use the bathroom	Often feels like they need to go to the bathroom
Vestibular Sense	Does not get dizzy	Does not like swings

To learn more about what sensory avoiding or sensory seeking behaviors may look like for each sense, click [here](#) or type “Twenty One Senses About the Senses” into your search engine.

- They also provide ways to support seekers and avoiders for each sense. This can help you support your grandchild's bodily needs.

It is best to learn about trauma, attachment, and sensory processing as it relates to your grandchild by working with a trained clinician. They can be informative, encouraging, and supportive, and help you use this information in a practical and even fun way.

- Sensory integration is a specialized area of occupational therapy in which therapists support their clients in self-regulation, building motor skills, and processing and organizing sensory information.⁸⁹
- 



PRIDE Skills

The PRIDE skills originate from Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), and they are meant to support the caregiver-child relationship while also reinforcing positive behavior.⁹⁰

Praise: Use specific phrases to let your grandchild know they are behaving well.

- Rather than saying “thank you”, say “thank you for picking up your toys”.
- Rather than saying “good job”, say “good job sharing with your sister”.

Reflection: Repeat what your grandchild is saying back to them so they know you are listening.

- Grandchild: “I am building a fort.”
- Grandparent: “You are building a super cool fort.”

Imitation: Match your grandchild's actions when appropriate to build connection.

- Follow your grandchild’s lead while they are playing.
- Copy the way that your grandchild interacts with their toys.

Description: Talk about what your child is doing to show that they have your attention.

- “You are playing with the dinosaur.”
- “You are brushing your doll's hair.”

Enjoyment: Show that you are having fun.

- Smile, make eye contact, and give hugs.
- “I am enjoying playing with you.”

Having Difficult Conversations

Navigating important conversations with your grandchildren can be difficult at times, especially if you are worried about discussing sensitive topics. This section can help you manage conversations with your grandchildren about their parents, substance use, and sex and puberty.

Having Difficult Conversations

How to Help Children Understand Changing Families

by Colorado State University⁹¹

Families nowadays often look different from what we consider a nuclear family.

- Dual-working parent families
- Single-parent families
- LGBTQ+ families
- Grandfamilies!

Sometimes it can be difficult to broach difficult conversations with grandchildren about why your family structure may look different than others, especially if they or their peers start asking questions.

It is important to discuss with your grandchildren and show them how family structures are changing.

- Model acceptance of your family structure and respect for other family structures.
- Discuss with your grandchildren how there are no “right” or “wrong” types of families.
- Emphasize that families are made up of individuals who love and support one another, providing security and companionship.
- Continue to talk about and normalize differences if your grandchildren ask about families being different.

To read more about grandparenting resources on health, parenting, education, and legal by Colorado State University, click [here](https://www.chhs.colostate.edu/grg/articles/#parenting) or type <https://www.chhs.colostate.edu/grg/articles/#parenting> into your web browser.

Talking to Children About A Parent's Substance Use

Why Is It Important To Talk To My Grandchild?⁹²

- A grandchild's development can be affected when their relationships and home life are unpredictable or inconsistent.
- Having these open and honest conversations with your grandchildren can support their formation of healthy relationships.

Eluna is an organization that serves families who are managing grief and addiction.⁹³ They have outlined tips to support families in navigating conversations about substance use disorder (SUD).

- Referring to addiction as SUD can help others understand how it is a medical condition that can be treated, rather than something someone chooses to do.
- When a loved one drinks alcohol or takes drugs often, it affects their brain. Their SUD makes their body feel like it needs alcohol or drugs to survive, and that drinking or doing drugs is the most important thing to do.
- Loved ones with SUD may feel like they need the drug or alcohol to get through the day, or to avoid the feeling of being sick.
- Children do not cause adults to drink alcohol or take drugs.
- SUD can be harmful and cause people to lose their jobs and/or hurt others they care about.
- SUD is more dangerous for younger individuals because their brains are still developing.

To see additional information from Eluna's website, click [here](https://elunanetwork.org/resources/how-to-explain-addiction-and-substance-use-disorder-to-children-6-12/) or type <https://elunanetwork.org/resources/how-to-explain-addiction-and-substance-use-disorder-to-children-6-12/> into your web browser.

Additional SUD Resources

The Hijacker is a video intended for children ages 13+ to describe how SUD impacts the brain. To watch the video, click [here](https://elunanetwork.org/resources/the-addiction-series-the-hijacker/) or type <https://elunanetwork.org/resources/the-addiction-series-the-hijacker/> into your web browser.

NPR has a podcast episode and an accompanying article with steps to support children whose parent(s) have a SUD. To read the article or listen to the podcast, click [here](https://www.npr.org/2020/02/05/802955134/helping-a-child-whose-parents-are-struggling-with-addiction) or type <https://www.npr.org/2020/02/05/802955134/helping-a-child-whose-parents-are-struggling-with-addiction> into your web browser.

The SAFE Project also has ways you can talk to your grandchild by age. They give tips for ages 3-6 and for ages 6-11. To look into the helpful information and education that they provide, click [here](https://www.safeproject.us/resource/talking-to-young-children-about-a-loved-ones-substance-use/) or type <https://www.safeproject.us/resource/talking-to-young-children-about-a-loved-ones-substance-use/> into your web browser.

Meet Karli! Karli is a Muppet whose mom has a substance use disorder. Sesame Street has created videos and resources to support families affected by SUD. For videos and activities, click [here](https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/parental-addiction/) or type <https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/parental-addiction/> into your web browser.

- For an additional Sesame Street video of Karli, click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGgW-f0RyfE) or type <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGgW-f0RyfE> into your web browser.

Discussing A Parent's Absence

Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network⁹⁴

Use these 3 key things when talking to your grandchild about their parent not being here.

1. Validate

- a. Validate your grandchild's feelings (e.g., I know it is hard that your mom is not here).
- b. Avoid stating negative things about their parent and placing blame.

2. Explain

- a. Describe in simple terms why your grandchild's parent is unable to care for them (e.g., your dad is having a difficult time taking care of himself).

3. Reaffirm

- a. Explain how you love your grandchild and are committed to caring for them.
- b. Use routines to help your grandchild feel safe.

Single Parent Alliance and Resource Center⁹⁵

Other tips you can use when speaking with your grandchild include:

- Use age-appropriate honesty to explain the situation.
- Emphasize that it is not your grandchild's fault that their parent is absent.
- Give your grandchild permission to ask questions again later.
- Try to avoid making promises that you cannot control (e.g., "I am sure they will come back someday").
- Make sure that you are in the right place to have a conversation.

Conversations About Sex, Sexuality, and Puberty

Planned Parenthood provides many resources to support caregivers in learning about sex, sexuality, and puberty.⁹⁶ Additionally, they educate readers on how to have conversations about these topics with the children in their care.

Sex

- How to start conversations about sex and relationships with your kid
- How to talk with your kid about porn
- How to talk with your teen about condoms
- Talking to your kids about consent and boundaries

Sexuality

- Facts you need to know about your kids: Gender identity and being trans
- How you can support your trans or nonbinary kid
- What's the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity

Puberty

- Talking with your kid about self-esteem and body image
- Talking with your kids about periods
- How to talk to your kid about wet dreams

To access information on the available topics, click [here](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/blog?blogCategory=Parenting) or type <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/blog?blogCategory=Parenting> into your web browser.

Taking Care of Your Health

During midlife, women experience a phase where there is a significant change in their hormones, known as menopause.

If you are a grandmother, you may experience menopause while raising your grandchildren. It is important to learn about menopause and the potential options that are available to best support you and your health needs.



Taking Care of Your Own Health

This section covers education and resources on women's health, menopause, and menopause-related treatment options.

Estrogen and progesterone are hormones involved in women's menstrual cycles (periods), pregnancies, and menopause.⁹⁷

- Estrogen helps with:
 - Puberty changes
 - Mood and emotional balance
 - Sleep and brain function
 - Bone strength and density
- Progesterone helps with:
 - Getting the uterus ready for pregnancy
 - Supporting pregnancy
 - Managing bleeding during menstruation

A woman's estrogen and progesterone levels change throughout her menstrual cycle.

- Estrogen works to thicken the lining of a woman's uterus and to start ovulation, which is when an egg is released and available to be fertilized.
- After ovulation, progesterone gets a woman's uterus ready for a potential pregnancy. If a woman does not become pregnant, her progesterone levels drop, and that is when a period begins.



During pregnancy, estrogen and progesterone levels increase throughout each trimester.

- After a baby is delivered and a woman is postpartum, hormone levels drop quickly, which can lead to hot flashes, night sweats, and mood changes.

Stages of Menopause by Planned Parenthood⁹⁸

Menopause usually occurs in a woman's late 40s or early 50s and is characterized by no longer having menstrual cycles when the ovaries cease to make estrogen and produce less progesterone. _

- A woman no longer gets periods and is unable to get pregnant.

Symptoms of menopause include:

- Irregular periods
- Hot flashes/night sweats
- Sleeping problems
- Vaginal changes
- Frequent urination
- Urinary and bladder infections
- Mood and/or sex drive changes
- Weaker bones

Planned Parenthood recommends you immediately call for help if you are experiencing:

- Sudden back/jaw pain along with nausea and sweating
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Achy soreness in your leg
- A new or bigger lump in your breast
- Unexpected bleeding from your vagina





Perimenopause is the time that precedes menopause, during which changes in estrogen production start to occur.

Symptoms of perimenopause include:

- Changes in the duration of time between periods
- Missing a period
- Changes in period flow (bleeding heavier or lighter than usual)
- Bleeding in between your periods

It is important to note that you can still get pregnant during perimenopause.

Postmenopause is the period of time after menopause, which is determined after a woman goes one year without having a period.

Menopause Resources

Massachusetts General Hospital Midlife Women's Health Center is dedicated to advancing healthcare for menopausal women.⁹⁹

Their website provides resources and videos for women that cover a variety of topics related to midlife, menopause, and associated symptoms.

Topics include hormone therapy, bone & joint health, brain health, cancer & survivorship, heart health, menopause, mood changes & stress, pelvic floor disorders, skin & hair health, vaginal dryness, and weight & nutrition.

To review the resources and videos, click [here](https://www.massgeneral.org/obgyn/treatments-and-services/midlife-womens-health-center) or type <https://www.massgeneral.org/obgyn/treatments-and-services/midlife-womens-health-center> into your web browser.

Menopause Treatment

According to UMass Memorial Health, they provide treatments to support women in managing their menopausal symptoms, including:¹⁰⁰

- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
 - Replaces hormones such as estrogen to reduce menopause-related symptoms
- Nonhormonal medication prescriptions
 - Helps to reduce symptoms without the use of hormones
- Lifestyle recommendations
 - Making changes to diet, exercise, sleep, or stress management to support well-being
- Referrals to other specialists
 - Including mental health providers for mental health support and orthopedists for joint pain

In addition to the services discussed above, Tufts Medicine provides preventative heart health care and osteoporosis treatment.¹⁰¹

- Heart health: Due to menopause increasing the risk of heart disease, providers focus on screenings and preventative measures to support women's heart health.
- Osteoporosis: A woman's risk of osteoporosis increases with age. Providers focus on treatments and recommendations to strengthen bones and reduce fracture risk.

For more information on services and resources, click [here](https://www.tuftsmedicine.org/services-treatments/obstetrics-gynecology-obgyn/menopause) or type <https://www.tuftsmedicine.org/services-treatments/obstetrics-gynecology-obgyn/menopause> into your web browser. Additionally, you can explore or inquire about the services offered by the obstetrics and gynecology (OBGYN) departments near you.

Emergency Preparedness

It is important to think about emergency preparedness, especially if you are caring for someone with higher needs. There may be extra steps that you and your family have to take in order to be properly prepared, whether it is for sheltering in place, evacuating, or managing any other kind of emergency that could happen.

Emergency Preparedness Resources

What is an emergency?

- Emergencies include natural disasters, storms, floods, fire, power failures, chemical spills/explosions, and medical emergencies

Since emergencies are often sudden and unexpected, it is important to prepare yourself and your family in advance.

- There are many online resources that offer guidance on how best to prepare for a variety of emergency situations.

Emergency Kits and Safety Tips

For the Massachusetts Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management's emergency supply kit checklist, click [here](https://www.mass.gov/doc/emergency-supply-kit-checklist-english/download) or type <https://www.mass.gov/doc/emergency-supply-kit-checklist-english/download> into your web browser.¹⁰²

- Store your kit in a dry, easy-to-access place.
- Check your kit every six months to replace outdated supplies.
- Include additional items that are important to you and your family's needs.

Their checklist includes several important categories, including:

- Supplies for Staying or Leaving Home
- Supplies for Staying Home (sheltering in place, quarantining, or isolating)
- Supplies for Leaving Home (evacuating)
- Local and Out-of-State Contacts for the Family
- Established Meeting Places for the Family
- Family Emergency Action Plan
- Important Family Information

Additionally, you can find the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency's (MEMA) emergency supplies checklist by clicking [here](#) or by typing <https://www.mass.gov/doc/emergency-kit-checklist/download> into your web browser.¹⁰³

- Additional COVID-19 items you could add to the list are face coverings or masks, disinfectants/hand sanitizers, and cleaning supplies.

Through MEMA, you can also find safety tips for specific threats and hazards, including:¹⁰⁴

- Tornadoes, Earthquakes, Hurricanes, and Floods
- Nor'easter, Coastal, and Winter Storms
- Public Health Emergencies
- Nuclear Power Plants
- Wildfires, Power Outages, and Droughts
- Thunderstorms and Lightning
- Extreme Heat or Extreme Cold
- Terrorism and Intentional Acts

To review the specific information provided on each topic, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/safety-tips-for-specific-threats-hazards> into your web browser.

It is important for your family to be familiar with first responders, including firefighters, police, utility providers, and those who work at emergency shelters, on evacuation routes, and in public transportation.

- Look for local “touch-a-truck” events where children can see a variety of emergency vehicles, such as fire trucks, ambulances, police cruisers, helicopters, and utility rigs.
- Sensory-friendly events are also offered across Massachusetts.

Individuals with Access and Functional Needs (AFN) may require additional steps to be adequately prepared in case of an emergency.¹⁰⁵

- People with disabilities
- People who live in institutionalized settings
- Elderly
- Children
- People from diverse cultures
- People with limited English proficiency/non-English speakers
- People who are transportation-disadvantaged

For individuals with AFN, it is important to consider what other supplies they may need.

- Medical supplies
 - Extra eyeglasses and/or hearing aids
 - Battery chargers and extra batteries for hearing aids, motorized wheelchairs, and other battery-operated medical devices
 - Extra medicine, oxygen, insulin, catheters, or other medical supplies you or your family uses regularly
- Documents
 - Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, physician contact information, and a list of any allergies and medical history
 - Copies of medical prescriptions, doctor's orders, and the style and serial number of support devices.
 - Medical alert tags or bracelets, or written descriptions of your loved one's support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation in an emergency.
- Other
 - Supplies for a service animal

Family Emergency Planning by MEMA¹⁰⁶

MEMA provides information on key aspects of emergency planning to help families prepare.

Their emergency planning includes information on:

- Establishing Meeting Locations
- Developing an Emergency Contact Plan
- Learning How to Receive Emergency Alerts
- Planning How to Evacuate
- Planning How to Shelter in Place
- Considering Everyone's Needs
- Practicing Your Plan with Your Household
- Considering Other Plans (workplace, school, daycare, etc.)

For more details about emergency planning, click [here](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/make-a-family-emergency-plan) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/make-a-family-emergency-plan> into your web browser.

Family Emergency Planning For Individuals with AFN¹⁰⁷

Identify family, neighbors, friends, service providers, and community groups who can help you plan for an emergency.

Let your utility provider know if you are dependent on electricity to operate a life-sustaining device.

Medical Support

- Find locations where dialysis or other life-sustaining medical treatment is available.
- Know the size and weight of your wheelchairs, and if they are collapsible, in case they need to be moved in an emergency.
- Show others how to properly use and manage your wheelchairs or other assistive devices.
- Create back-up plans for personal assistance services, hospice care, or other forms of in-home assistance.

Transportation and Evacuation

- Work with local transportation providers and/or disability services to plan ahead for accessible transportation.
- Contact your local Emergency Management Director if you or a family member needs help evacuating your home.
 - To find the contact information of the Emergency Management Director in your city, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/find-your-local-emergency-management-director-emd> into your web browser
- Be prepared to explain your specific needs, or those of a family member, to first responders and emergency officials so you receive the support you need to evacuate safely and find shelter.

To find more detailed information about emergency preparedness for individuals with access and functional needs, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/emergency-preparedness-for-individuals-with-disabilities-and-access-and-functional-needs> into your web browser.

Tips for People with Disabilities taken in its entirety from DHS¹⁰⁸

Tips for People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Weather radio with text display and a flashing alert
- Extra hearing aid batteries
- Pen and paper
- Battery-operated lantern to enable communication by sign language or lip reading, especially when the electricity is out

Tips for People with a Mobility Disability

- If you use a power wheelchair, have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup, if possible
- Show others how to assemble/disassemble and operate your wheelchair
- Purchase extra batteries for power wheelchairs or other battery-operated medical or assistive devices
- Consider keeping a patch kit or a can of sealant for flat tires and/or an extra inner tube if a wheelchair or scooter is not puncture-proof
- Keep an extra device, such as a cane or walker, if you use one
- Keep a portable air pump for wheelchair tires
- If you use a seat cushion to protect your skin or maintain your balance, consider keeping an extra cushion on hand
- Communicate with neighbors who can assist you if you need to evacuate the building

Tips for People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print.
- Keep communication devices, such as Braille or a deaf-blind communications device, as part of your emergency supply kit

Tips for People with a Speech Disability

- If you use an augmentative communication device or other assistive technologies, plan how you will evacuate with it or how you will replace equipment if it is lost or destroyed
- Keep model information and note where the equipment is from
- Plan communication with others if your equipment is not working, including laminated cards with phrases and/or a pictogram

Tips for Individuals with Alzheimer's and Related Dementia

- Do not leave the person alone. Even those who aren't prone to wandering away may do so in unfamiliar environments/situations
- If evacuating, help manage the change in environment by bringing a pillow, blanket, or other comforting item for them
- At a shelter, try to stay away from exits and choose a quiet corner
- If there is an episode of agitation, respond to the emotions being expressed. For example, say "You're frightened and want to go home. It's ok. I'm right here with you."

Tips for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

- Keep handheld electronic devices charged and loaded with videos and activities
- Purchase spare chargers for electronic devices
- Include sheets and twine or a small pop-up tent (to decrease visual stimulation in a busy room or to provide instant privacy)
- Consider a pair of noise-canceling headphones to decrease auditory stimuli
- Have comfort snacks available

For additional details, information, and helpful videos, click [here](https://www.ready.gov/people-disabilities) or type <https://www.ready.gov/people-disabilities> into your web browser. When gathering items for your emergency preparedness kit, consider checking thrift stores and garage sales for second-hand supplies such as camping gear, tools, and cookware.

- Additionally, consider saving old clothing as backups for when needed.

Ensure that food, medication, batteries, and other supplies are appropriately stored and in date.

Technology Resources

As technology continues to grow and remain common within our daily lives, it is important to consider how it influences growing children and what we can do to prevent negative outcomes. This section covers screen time recommendations for infants, toddlers, and adolescents. Additionally, it discusses how to identify and incorporate healthy media use into your home.

Technology Resources

Screen Time

What counts as screen time?

- Time that is spent looking at screens, including smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, TVs, and computers.

Guidelines by Age taken in its entirety from Children's Hospital of LA¹⁰⁹

Infant (0-18 months)

- Occasional supervised video chats with family and friends
- Avoid leaving the TV on or using your phone around your baby

Babies (18-24 months)

- Supervised video chats with family and friends, and occasional high-quality educational content
- Avoid fast-paced or violent content
- Turn off in-app purchases and autoplay, set up parental controls

Toddlers (2-5 years)

- Encourage high-quality educational content and co-view new material
- Ask questions to encourage engagement about what they're seeing to develop understanding

Elementary-Age Children (5-12)

- Creative/education content promoting healthy interactions, with periodic co-viewing
- Develop a family plan with healthy media limits; monitor device usage
- Make sure screen time does not affect sleep, exercise, and family time

Teens (13-18 years)

- Creative/educational content promoting healthy interactions, and co-view new material
- Monitor social media exposure and online activities to protect them from potential risks
- Encourage frequent screen breaks
- Set up screen-free zones (dinner table, bed, etc.); prioritize physical activity

Too much screen time can lead to:

- Disrupted sleep
- Frequent irritability
- Attention challenges
- Eye discomfort, fatigue, dryness, loss of focus, and nearsightedness
- Less pretend and creative play
- Less emotional expression
- Higher rates of depression and anxiety in older kids and teenagers

Build Healthy Digital Habits from the American Academy of Pediatrics¹¹⁰

Create a Media Plan

- Media Balance (ex: having fewer apps on your device)
- Communicating About Media (ex: discussing ways media can affect mental health)
- Kindness and Empathy (ex: being kind and considerate to others online)
- Digital Privacy and Safety (ex: trying to avoid oversharing)
- Screen-Free Zones (ex: keeping meals screen-free)
- Screen-Free Times (ex: avoiding screens before school)
- Choosing Good Content (ex: being intentional about media use)
- Using Media Together (ex: planning family movie nights)

Balance Family Time and Screen Time

- Consider setting do-not-disturb times and time limits on devices
- Track where screen-time is being allocated and discuss which activities may be problematic
- Try to turn off media that isn't in use. Use music if background noise is desired

Talk About Social Media

- Ask questions, such as "What do you like about social media?"
- Help children understand what's real versus fake
- Ensure children know they can come to you to discuss their online experiences
- Teach them how to identify ads or inappropriate content

Set a Good Example

- When your attention is on your device, explain to children what you are doing
- Discuss your own media habits
- Model using media for good

Optimize Your Family's Online Experience

- Be aware of which platforms are age-appropriate
- Set rules for chatting with others online
- Set privacy settings
- Watch for warning signs (withdrawing from social interactions and hobbies, letting screen time interfere with physical activity, healthy eating, or bedtime)

Items listed under each category explain why they are important and how you can incorporate them into your family plan.

To take an in-depth look at actionable things you can implement with your family or to get help creating your own family media plan, click [here](#) or type

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx> into your web browser.

Child Mind Institute¹¹¹

The Child Mind Institute is an organization dedicated to prioritizing and supporting children's mental health. They discuss the aforementioned recommendations for technology use and expand on them with additional tips.

Very Young Children (0-4 years old)

- Lead by example
- Facilitate unstructured free play
- Leave the tablet at home

Grade School-Age Children (5-11 years old)

- Do not make screens the reward or consequence
- Model and encourage other activities or hobbies
- Be prepared to discuss porn

Tweens and Teens (12+)

- Build trust and do not look at texts unless it is warranted
- Explain why naked pictures are a bad idea
- Discuss how it is hard to convey or derive tone through text messages

For the complete media guidelines for kids, click [here](#) or type <https://childmind.org/article/media-guidelines-for-kids-of-all-ages/> into your web browser.

Common Sense Media¹¹²

Common Sense Media focuses on research, advocacy, and education on protecting children in the world's digital era.

On their website, they state that there are no specific guidelines on how many hours children should spend on devices at different ages.

- Emphasize the quality and appropriateness of the content children consume, rather than the quantity.
- Try to facilitate other offline activities for children to participate in.
- Foster open communication about technology use and limits.
- Support healthy self-regulation and teach children to manage emotions such as boredom or anxiety without screens.

Their website also provides tips on how to determine what is quality content. They discuss considering various aspects of technology engagement, including:

- Whether an application has open-ended chat features, data collection, violent or other mature content, antisocial messages, in-game purchases or ads, and even implicit messages about things like appearance.
- Content that may not be labeled as educational but that children can still learn from, such as games that involve strategy or practicing patience, and TV shows that demonstrate teamwork.
- Observing changes in a child's reactions or behavior after engaging with particular content, such as acting like a mean character, having nightmares, or other negative impacts

For more helpful information from Common Sense Media, click [here](https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/when-families-ask-about-healthy-digital-habits-and-quality-content) or type <https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/when-families-ask-about-healthy-digital-habits-and-quality-content> into your web browser.

Zoom¹¹³

Since COVID-19, the video conferencing platform Zoom has become increasingly popular for hosting virtual meetings, webinars, workshops, and more.

With its many new and changing features, navigating Zoom can be confusing and time-consuming.

On Zoom's website, there are many videos demonstrating how to use the various Zoom functions, including:

- How to join a meeting
- How to schedule a meeting
- How to host a meeting
- How to record a meeting
- How to use the chat and reactions
- How to create breakout rooms
- How to manage screen sharing

To access the Zoom videos, click [here](https://learning.zoom.us/learn) or type <https://learning.zoom.us/learn> into your web browser.

To watch these tutorials, you will have to log in to your personal Zoom account. If you do not have a Zoom account, you can create one for free using your email address.

- Of note, free Zoom accounts are considered Basic Plans and have a 40-minute time limit on meetings scheduled, through the account, though there is no limit to how many meetings can be scheduled.
- To access the videos, click on the topic you wish to learn about, click "enroll", and begin the course.

Other Resources

This section contains additional resources that did not fit into the previous categories, but may be helpful to you and your family. Included are additional community resources and information that you can access for support.

Other Resources

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren¹¹⁴

The Commission supports grandparent-headed households through community, advocacy, and resources.

- They are state-funded and provide various forms of support to grandparents and other kinship caregivers.
- They work with the government and state organizations to address the best interests of grandparent caregivers.

The Commission hosts many events and workshops during the year.

- To view upcoming events and workshops, click [here](#) or type <https://massgrg.com/events/> into your web browser.

On their website, you can also find a directory of resources, including:

- Support Groups
- Support Group Facilitators Hub
- Legal
- Financial
- Support Services Library
- Tip Sheets
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Commission also hosts an annual conference for grandparent caregivers and providers who work with them and their families.

- The conference includes a lived experience panel, guest speaker presentations, and resources from many local organizations.

To join the newsletter for updates on events and resources, click [here](#) or type <https://massgrg.com/about/#stayinformed> into your web browser.

CarFit Program¹¹⁵

CarFit is an organization originally founded by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). It is focused on ensuring safe driving and mobility for older adults.

- This is accomplished through their free CarFit Program, where trained volunteer technicians conduct an assessment and make recommendations for adjustments to your vehicle.
- This includes providing education on mirror adjustments, seat position, and steering wheel tilt to support the proper fit of your car while you are driving.

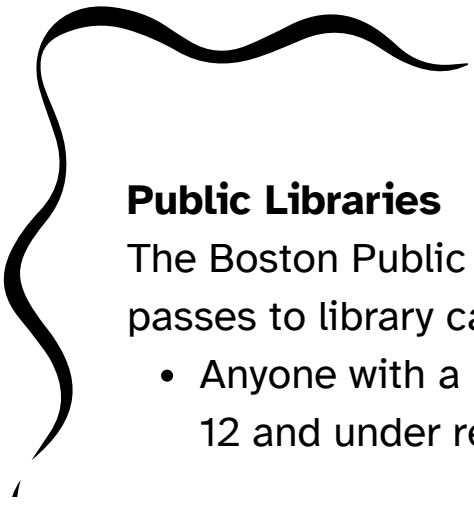
Examples of how CarFit recommendations impact safety:

- Mirror adjustments: Assist in reducing blind spots when trying to change lanes
- Seat positioning: Influences foot positioning on pedals to reduce fatigue while driving and prevent slowed reaction times
- Steering wheel tilt: Preventing injury from sitting too close to the steering wheel

For a CarFit event, click [here](#) or type <https://car-fit.org/find-an-event> into your web browser, then select your state.

- After choosing which event you would like to attend, click the listing to find information on how to register.

If you are unable to find a CarFit event, consider watching their free on-demand workshop or signing up for their virtual workshop events. More information on these resources can be found at the link above.



Public Libraries

The Boston Public Library (BPL) offers free or discounted museum passes to library card holders.¹¹⁶

- Anyone with a Massachusetts state ID can get a BPL card (children 12 and under require a parent/guardian signature).

Current museum passes include:

- Boston Children's Museum
- Harvard Museums of Science & Culture
- Museum of Fine Arts
- New England Aquarium
- And more!

To view a comprehensive list of available museum passes, click [here](#) or type <https://www.bpl.org/museum-passes/> into your web browser.

BPL cardholders can book each pass once within a 30-day period and can book one pass per day.

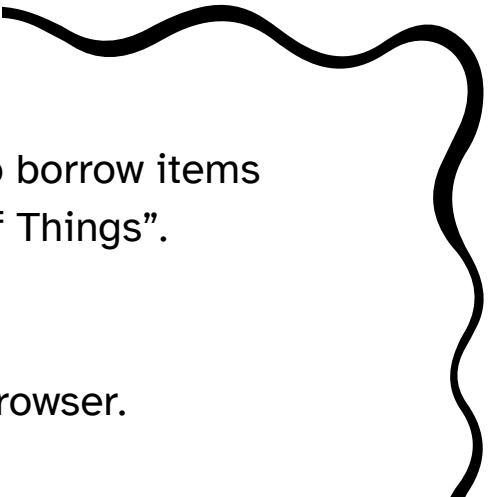
- You must have a physical library card to reserve museum passes.
- You need your library card number and PIN for the reservation.

Some museum passes are physical and need to be picked up and returned by a certain date.

- Some may be promo codes, e-tickets, or e-coupons

To reserve passes, click [here](#) or type <https://bpl.libcal.com/passes> into your web browser.

Additionally, consider checking your local library's website to see whether they offer museum passes and how to reserve them with your library card.



Many libraries also offer cardholders opportunities to borrow items other than books. This is often known as a “Library of Things”.

To find the BPL’s Library of Things, click [here](https://www.bpl.org/library-of-things/) or type <https://www.bpl.org/library-of-things/> into your web browser.

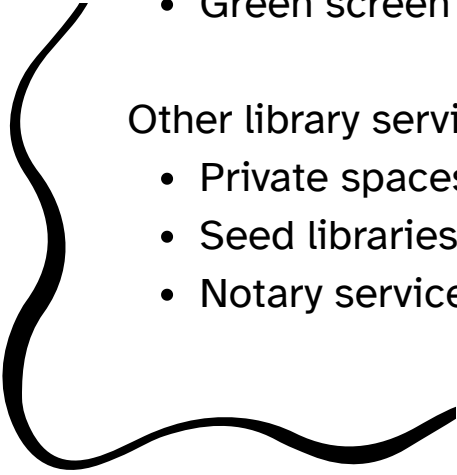
- DVD players
- Telescopes
- Fishing poles
- Sewing machines
- And more!

Massachusetts libraries may offer items such as puzzles, gaming devices, arts-and-crafts supplies, and musical instruments.

- Consider looking into your local library to see what additional items they may offer!

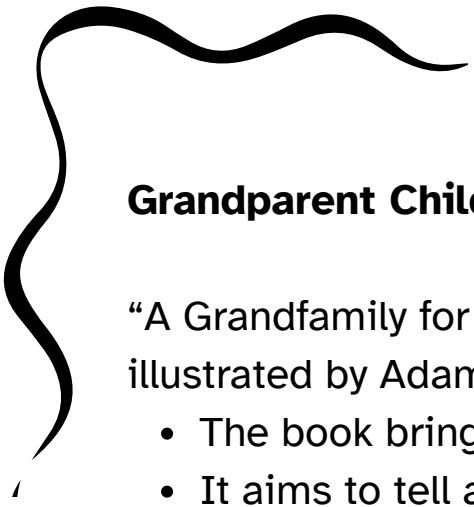
Your local library may also have innovation centers or makerspaces where community members can access a range of tools, devices, and supplies. This can include:

- Software (Adobe Creative Cloud, GarageBand, etc.)
- 3D printing
- Vinyl cutting
- T-shirt press
- Microphone
- Lighting equipment
- Green screen



Other library services may include:

- Private spaces: Reserve meeting rooms or study rooms
- Seed libraries: Get various plant seeds for gardening
- Notary services: Have a witness for signing documents



Grandparent Children's Book

“A Grandfamily for Sullivan” written by Beth Winkler Tyson and illustrated by Adam Walker-Parker.¹¹⁷

- The book brings awareness to foster, kinship, and adoptive families.
- It aims to tell a story that helps children cope with adverse life experiences they may have had.

The book is about Sullivan, a koala who starts living with his grandma after his parents are unable to take care of him.

- Follow Sullivan as he navigates his emotions while wondering why he is living with his grandmother rather than his parents.

In the book's description, Sullivan's story helps readers:

- Name body sensations associated with negative emotions
- Use mindfulness skills
- Talk to others about their thoughts and feelings
- Learn about how families are different

To read more about the book or to purchase a copy, click [here](https://www.amazon.com/Grandfamily-Sullivan-Coping-Kinship-Families/dp/1706794665) or type <https://www.amazon.com/Grandfamily-Sullivan-Coping-Kinship-Families/dp/1706794665> into your web browser.

Aging Services Access Point (ASAP)¹¹⁸

ASAPs are agencies dedicated to supporting older adults in Massachusetts aged 60 and up.

- Across the state, there are currently 23 ASAPs across the state
- They are all contracted by the Executive Office of Aging and Independence

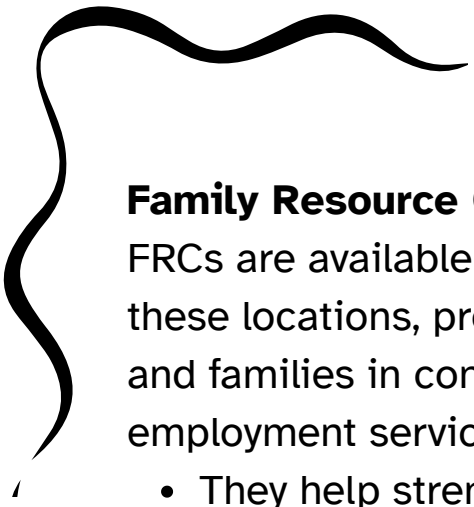
Your local ASAP can help you access various services and resources related to:

- Home care
- Nutrition assistance and food security
- Housing support
- Health and financial wellness
- Transportation and safety

To find an ASAP service center near you, you can click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-your-regional-aging-services-access-point-asap> into your web browser.

One of the specific services that ASAPs offer is the Family Caregiver Support Program¹¹⁹

- This program also supports grandparents/other relatives 55+ who care for children under 18 or a disabled adult between the ages of 18 and 59.
- Through the program, you are connected with a Caregiver Specialist who can provide tips and resources, including training and respite care.
- To speak with a Caregiver Specialist, call (800) 243-4636.
- For more information about the program, click [here](#) or type <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/family-caregiver-support-program#eligibility-and-cost> into your web browser



Family Resource Centers (FRCs)¹²⁰

FRCs are available across each of Massachusetts's 14 counties. At these locations, professionals are there to support caregivers, children, and families in connecting with health, safety, educational, and employment services.

- They help strengthen caregiving skills
- They facilitate peer support
- They assist in family crises
- They support child development

At the FRCs, there are various other programs, events, and services, including:

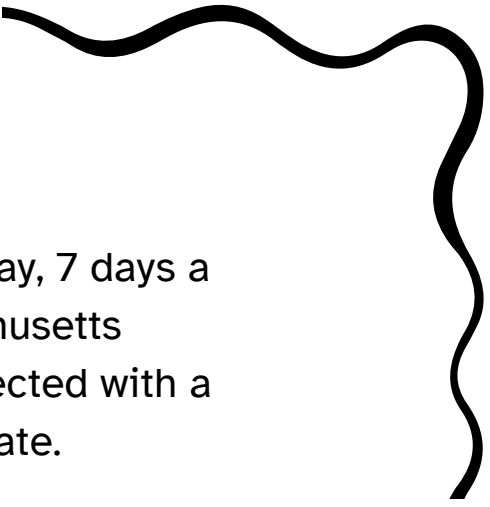
- Caregiver education programs
- Youth and caregiver support groups
- Early childhood services
- Information and referral
- Educational support
- Cultural events

Other services FRCs can connect you with:

- Substance use
- Special education
- LGBTQ+
- Legal services for youth
- Childcare

For help finding a Family Resource Center near you, click [here](https://www.frcma.org/locations/) or type <https://www.frcma.org/locations/> into your web browser.

- To look into other services that FRCs offer, click [here](https://www.frcma.org/services/) or type <https://www.frcma.org/services/> into your web browser.



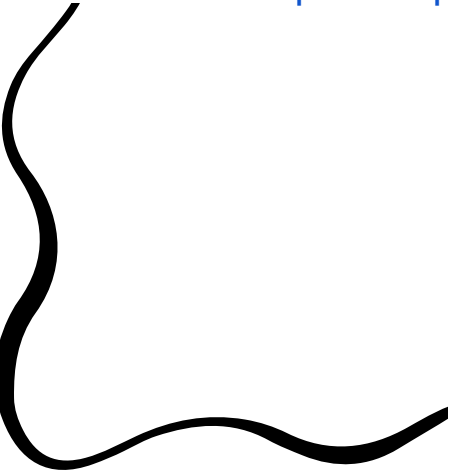
Mass211¹²¹

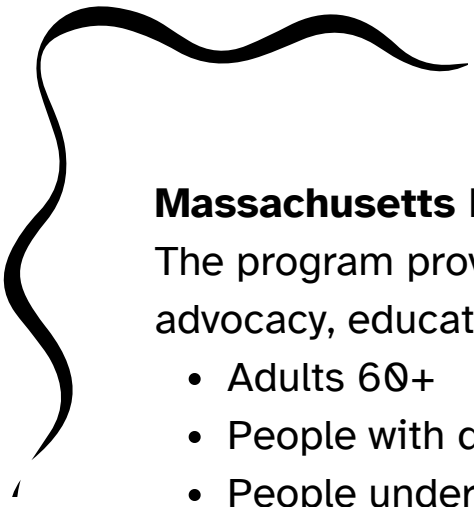
Mass211 is a service that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By calling 2-1-1 (or 1-877-211-6277), Massachusetts residents can make a confidential call to be connected with a range of services and resources throughout the state.

Mass211 can help with referrals to:

- Behavioral health services
- Domestic violence help
- Housing/shelter resources
- Youth homelessness support
- Emergency/disaster preparedness
- Transportation services
- Childcare services
- Child requiring assistance (CRA) services
- Food security resources
- Utility assistance

For more information about how Mass211 can help you or a family member, click [here](#) or type <https://mass211.org/> into your web browser.

- Mass 211 also has a resource finder, where you can enter your ZIP code and find resources local to you.
 - To access the resource finder, click [here](#) or type <https://helpsteps.com/> into your web browser.
- 



Massachusetts Home Care Program¹²²

The program provides care management, care coordination, advocacy, education, and in-home and community support services.

- Adults 60+
- People with disabilities
- People under age 60 living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia.

Services provided by the Home Care Program may include:

- Chore services
- Grocery shopping/delivery
- Homemaker services
- Laundry service
- Respite care
- Aide-assisted transportation
- Transitional assistance
- And more!

Available services depend on a case-by-case assessment of need based on age, residence, and ability to carry out daily tasks.

- The cost of services is income-dependent.

To learn more about what the Home Care Program offers and how to access their various services, you can click [here](#) or type

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/home-care-program#eligibility> into your web browser.

- Additionally, you can call MassOptions at 1-800-243-4636 for assistance.

New and Upcoming!

Senior Connection is an organization dedicated to serving older adults in Central Massachusetts.¹²³ They work to provide older adults with resources related to nutrition, transportation, legal assistance, crisis intervention, and more.

With congressional funding, Senior Connection is planning to build a Grandfamily Village in Worcester!

- Currently, they intend to build 40 family-friendly apartments and green spaces within their housing community.

Through this work, Senior Connection wants to provide grandparents and their grandchildren with safe, affordable, and supportive housing.X

- This includes an on-site medical clinic, community health workers, wellness programs, and connections to social services.
- They will have an on-site Grandparents Raising Grandkids Resource Center.
- There will be trauma-informed supports for grandchildren with parents who are deceased or who have a substance use disorder.

Senior Connection also plans to have an on-site cafe, which will generate revenue to support the Grandfamily Village.

- Additionally, the cafe will provide jobs for youth, enabling them to gain experience through workforce training and build life skills.

Construction is anticipated to begin in the summer or fall of 2027!

To read more about the Grandfamily Village, click [here](https://seniorconnection.org/grandparents-raising-grandkids/grandfamily-village/) or type <https://seniorconnection.org/grandparents-raising-grandkids/grandfamily-village/> into your web browser.

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