

## **FAMILY TIES** of Massachusetts



*Together In Enhancing Support*

## Western Regional Support Groups

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

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

Last Updated 7/6/11

**If you know of a support group in Western Massachusetts that you would like to see added to this Regional Support Group list, please call Family TIES Western Regional Coordinator, at 413-586-7525 or 1-800-905-TIES. THANK YOU.**

## **ADOPTION**

**Adoptive Families Together:** Adoptive parents come together and meet in Worcester. Call for meeting details.

**CONTACT:** MSPCC, 617-587-1522 or visit:

**EMAIL:** lbaeumler@mspcc.org

**WEBSITE:** www.mspcc.org

## **ADVOCACY**

**Greater Athol Area Advocates for Families with Special Needs:** Family and Individual support agency hosts information sessions on a variety of topics. Meetings are usually held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at 7PM at 359 Main Street, Athol. Call for information on upcoming topics.

**CONTACT:** Pat, 978-249-4052

**Westfield Self-Advocacy Group:** Open to young adults' ages 14-22 years old, once per week at WHS. Activities include field trips, guest speakers, community exploration activities, self-advocacy skill development and more.

**CONTACT:** Sherry Elander

**PHONE:** 413-572-6464

**EMAIL:** s.elander@schoolsofwestfield.org

## **AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS**

**Parent-to-Parent Groups:** Families come together to share experiences, to network about resources, meet other parents and chat. Speakers are invited periodically to address other issues. Parents groups are available for English- and Spanish-speaking families. Call for meetings times and locations throughout the region.

**CONTACT:** Autism Support Center, 413-529-2428

**The Amherst Autism Parent Group:** meets on the 3rd Saturday of each month from September through May. Meetings are generally held between 10am and noon at 691 South East Street in Amherst, MA. Child care is provided on site. To confirm the meeting time and location, or to be added to our parent email list please call.

**Contact:** Chris and Laurel, 413-230-3287

**Email:** peltiersings@gmail.com

## **BEREAVEMENT**

**Annunciation Parish Center:** A group for anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month. Choice of two times, 10AM and 6:30PM at 87 Beacon Street, Florence. Free and open to all faiths.

**CONTACT:** 413-584-1753

**Compassionate Friends:** A nationwide support group for parents, who have experienced the loss of a child. The support group meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month at 3300 Main Street, Springfield at 7:00 P.M.

**CONTACT:** Beth 413-687-1703

**E-mail** ftbmbeth@aol.com

**Jewish Family Services:** A group for those coping with the loss of a loved one meets on Mondays from 1:15-2:30PM at 16 Armory Street, Northampton.

**CONTACT:** 413-582-6970

**Online Support Network for Parents of Children with Serious Illnesses:** “It’s 3:00 in the morning. I can’t sleep. My grief and fear are overwhelming...The doctor suggested a support group, but I don’t have time. There is not enough of me... .. I know there’s help out there, but it’s all so overwhelming... How can I get the information I need to make good decisions, support in dealing with my fears, and explanations for my feelings of grief and anger?” --Michelle, Emily’s Mom

**Contact:** <http://www.partnershipforparents.org>

## **BRAIN INJURY**

**Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts:** Offers supports and services, programs to prevent brain injuries and to educate the public. The association sponsors and maintains a list of support groups. Support groups are open to anyone with brain injury and may not be child or parent specific. For details about the groups, contact the group directly or call the Berkshire office.

**CONTACT:** Suzanne Doswell 413-443-0200

**Brain Injury Helpline:** 800-242-0030

**Ludlow Rehab Hospital:** Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month at 2:00 PM in the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor of the Education Center, 14 Chestnut Street, Ludlow.

**CONTACT:** Robin 413-547-2616

**Northampton Survivors and Family Support Group:** Meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month from 4:30 -6:30 PM at the Forbes Library, 20 West Street, Northampton.

**CONTACT:** Peggy Besht, 413-584-6792

**Pittsfield – Berkshire Brain Injury Support Group:** Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 4:00PM at the Center for Rehabilitation at Berkshire Medical Center, 777 North Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Medical Arts Building, Pittsfield.

**CONTACT:** Suzanne Doswell, 413-443-0200

**Pittsfield – Support Group for 15 to 20 year old with Brain Injury:** Meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at 3:00PM at the Center for Rehabilitation at Berkshire Medical Center, 777 North Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Medical Arts Building, Pittsfield.

**CONTACT:** Suzanne Doswell, 413-443-0200

**Pittsfield – “Sit, Knit & Stitch” Support Group for Brain Injury:** Meets on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday each week at Providence Court, Dining Room, 379 East Street, Pittsfield. PLEASE CALL BEFORE YOUR FIRST MEETING.

**CONTACT:** Sonali Durden 413-443-6063

**Springfield - Family & Survivors Support Group:** Meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month from 6:00-8:00 PM at Mercy Hospital, Deliso Conference Center, Lower Level Break Room, 299 Carew Street, Springfield.

**CONTACT:** Sharon Abdala, 413-748-6892

## **DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING**

**Clarke School for the Deaf Parent Groups:** Meets monthly on Sunday afternoons, 2:00-4:00 pm at the Clarke Family Center, 45 Round Hill Road, Northampton, MA. Children of all ages are encouraged to join us for activities! Please call for more information about details.

**CONTACT:** Martha A. deHahn, Director of Program Information and Outreach, 413-587-7387.

**EMAIL:** mdehahn@clarkeschools.org

**Hear My Dreams Support group for parents of children with hearing loss:** Meets every Second Tuesday of odd numbered months from 7:00-9:00 pm in Worcester.

**CONTACT:** Megan Ford, Au.D, 508 -334-8736

**EMAIL:** hmdadmin@hearmydreams.com

## **DOWN SYNDROME**

**D.A.D.S. (Dads Appreciating Down Syndrome):** Meets monthly (generally the 4<sup>th</sup> or last Wednesday evening) in the South Shore or Metrowest region. The group's purposes are to create a network that meets the needs of its members while sharing information, camaraderie, and fun. Call for more information about the group's activities or meeting details.

**CONTACT:** Jeff Roback, 339-788-1460

**EMAIL:** paulsdadda@yahoo.com

**Down Syndrome Family Support Group of Berkshire County:** Meets in the Training Room at Berkshire County ARC, 88 Old Windsor Road, Dalton. Call for more information.

**CONTACT:** Marie (413) 499-4241 ext. 265

**EMAIL:** mtiffany@bcarc.org

**WEBSITE:** www.bcarc.org

**Down Syndrome Resource Group:** Parent group meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of March, September, and November. Call for details; visit website for more information, resources and activities.

**CONTACT:** Tanya, 413-562-7395

**EMAIL:** tanya.wheeler24@gmail.com

**WEBSITE:** www.dssupport.org

**Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress:** MDSC helps parents and professionals to understand and cope with issues relating to Down Syndrome.

**CONTACT:** 1-800-664-MDSC for more information

## **EATING DISORDERS**

**Eating Disorders / Friends and Family:** A support group for family members and friends of people who experience an eating disorder or body-acceptance issues meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month from 6-7:30PM at 90 Conz Street, Northampton.

**CONTACT:** Maureen or John, 413-527-3305

**MEDA Support Group:** Hope and Inspiration is a free drop-in group that takes place on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday each month from 10:00-11:00AM at the MEDA (an eating disorder treatment and prevention organization) office located at 92 Pearl Street, Newton. During the hour, a recovered individual shares his or her story of recovery, leaving time for discussion and questions.

**CONTACT:** MEDA, 617-558-1881, Ext. 12

**WEBSITE:** [www.medainc.org](http://www.medainc.org)

## **EDUCATION**

### **P.L.A.C.E: Parents of Longmeadow Advisory Council for Education**

A volunteer organization comprised of parents challenged to make a difference in the perceptions of children with special needs. Families get together to share experiences, resources, and to meet other parents. Speakers are invited to provide workshops and address issues of special education.

**CONTACT:** Michelle, 413-565-4210 ext. 30

**EMAIL:** [mkfoard@comcast.net](mailto:mkfoard@comcast.net)

**Special Education Parent Advisory:** Families get together to share experiences and resources, and to meet other parents. Speakers are invited to address issues such as education and advocacy. Meetings held in Springfield. Call for or e-mail for meeting details.

**CONTACT:** Diane, Special Education Parent Advocate, 413-787-7194

**E-MAIL:** [purchased@sps.springfield.ma.us](mailto:purchased@sps.springfield.ma.us)

**Special Education Parent Advisory:** Families get together to share experiences and resources, and to meet other parents. Speakers are invited to address issues such as education and advocacy. Meetings held in Monson. Call for meeting details.

**CONTACT:** Pamela, 413-267-0100

**NAMI-Berkshire County:** Families gather on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Wednesday of each month at the Brien Center Conference Room, 333 East Street, Pittsfield to support educational issues for families of children with mental health concerns

**CONTACT:** Brenda, 413-443-1666

**EMAIL:** [bgarcia@namibc.org](mailto:bgarcia@namibc.org)

## **FAMILY & PARENT SUPPORT**

**Special Needs Support System:** Offers all families of children with special needs in western mass the support they deserve by offering topic discussions for parents, guest speakers with trainings, relaxation ideas, family nights and a clothing swap and more. For the children we offer activity time based on learning styles and promote social and life skills and help them be more aware of sensory issues. By offering arts and crafts, puppet shows, music therapy, movies, books, out door activities, and more we base this on specific lessons.

**CONTACT:** Stephanie, 413- 693-5188

**EMAIL:** specialchildren@yahoo.com

**PARENT SUPPORT GROUP HADLEY:** Being a caregiver to a loved one or a family member with special needs can be difficult, frightening, challenging, isolating and also rewarding and joyful. At Whole Children & The Hampshire Family Support Center parents join together once a month for a free interactive support group focused on sharing experiences as they relate to Special Education, Stigma, Future & Transition Planning, services & resources and the challenges of raising a child with special needs. Meetings are held at 41 Russell Street, Hadley. Call for details.

**CONTACT:** Desiree Lowit, 413-695-7589

**EMAIL:** desilowit@gmail.com

**Fuerza Latina por Nuestros Hijos:** Familias con niños que viven con diferentes condiciones médicas. Se reunen una vez al mes para compartir experiencias, recursos, e información. Despues de la reunión, los padres almuerzan en un ambiente acojedor. (Families with kids of different conditions and all ages get together to share experiences, resources, and information. After the meeting in Northampton, parents share lunch in a comfortable environment. Call for meeting times.

**CONTACT:** Eneida García, 413-582-9097

**Hispanic Support Group:** Talleres, entrenamientos y apoyo general para padres de niños con incapacitados. Asuntos discutidos en enventos previos fueron IEP, derechos básicos, y medicamentos. (Workshops, trainings and general support for parents of children with disabilities. Issues addressed in previous events were IEP, basic rights, and medication. Spanish-speaking group with meetings held in Springfield. Call for meeting times.)

**CONTACT:** Goodwill Industries, 413-788-6984

**Parent Support Group:** Meets one evening each month at Pediatric Development Center, Pittsfield. Speakers may be invited to address specific issues such as general needs, information-sharing, and resources. Call also to assist with parent-to-parent connections. Call for details.

**CONTACT:** Diane Farella, 413-499-4537

**Berkshire Children & Family McInerney Parent Services:** Offers parent support and education groups and interactive play groups. Groups are held in North Adams and Pittsfield. Groups meet in Pittsfield and North Adams. Call for more information.

**CONTACT:** Amy, (413) 499-3556, Ext. 14

## **GRANDPARENT SUPPORT**

**Berkshire Children & Family McInerney Parent Services:** Grandparents Raising Grandchildren offers support and assistance. Groups meet in Pittsfield and North Adams. Call for more information.

**CONTACT:** Amy, (413) 499-3556, Ext 14

**Elder Parents Group:** Group of elder parents provide friendship, support, hope, and challenges to each other as they advocate for the future of their adult sons and daughters with disabilities. Meets at Multicultural Community Services, 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield. Call for date and time.

**CONTACT:** Marie, 413-782-2500

**Grandparents As Parents:** Grandparents come together to talk about their experiences, share information, and resources. Meetings held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month in Chicopee from 6:00-7:15 PM. Call for details.

**CONTACT:** Jim Leyden, 413-534-3698

## **HOME SCHOOLING SUPPORTS**

**Hilltown Families:** Hilltown Families ("HF") is a grassroots communications network of homeschool and after-school families with children from Kindergarten to 6<sup>th</sup> Grade living in the rural hill towns of Western Massachusetts. HF affords families the opportunity to share and organize events, and activities that supplement their children's education, while offering support and opportunities to socialize. HF moderates a private email listserv for the use of hilltown families to communicate and facilitate discussions, and offers free news feed service providing news and updates posted to Hilltown Families website.

**EMAIL:** [swildfield@juno.com](mailto:swildfield@juno.com)

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.hilltownfamilies.org>

**Pioneer Valley Homeschoolers:** This is an inclusive, eclectic support group for homeschooling families in Western Massachusetts. Meetings and/or field trips are scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays. All are welcome!

**CONTACT: Montague:** Anne, 413-367-7506 or EMAIL: [hschooler01@hotmail.com](mailto:hschooler01@hotmail.com)

**The Crayola Homeschool Support Group:** Provides support for Springfield homeschooling families through meetings, activities, and field trips. We also provide an online discussion group for those who wish to reach and converse via the internet.

**CONTACT:** Jessica Lozada, 413-788-4826 (Mon-Fri, 8AM-6PM, Weekends, 10AM-3PM)

**ON-LINE DISCUSSION GROUP:** <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TheCrayolaHomeschoolSupport/>

## **MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

**Amputee Support System In Step Together:** A peer-level support, education and advocacy group for individuals and their families who have experienced amputation. Group meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday each month at 6:30 PM at Mercy Medical Center's Deliso Conference Center, 299 Carew Street, Springfield.

**CONTACT:** 413-748-6890

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.mercycares.com/calendar.asp>

**Eosinophilic Gastrointestinal Disorders Support Group:** Provides support to parents and opportunities to meet and share for young adults and adults affected by EGID. Meets second Saturday of the month at Children's Hospital Waltham, 9 Hope Avenue, Waltham; speakers with the group offer educational talks on a variety of topics. Call for meeting details and RSVP.

**EMAIL:** [dianna@EGIDBoston.org](mailto:dianna@EGIDBoston.org)

**Fragile X Resource Center of Western Mass:** Our group is LINKed (NEFAC, New England Fragile X Advisory Council) with the Boston Children's Hospital Fragile X Program which evaluates patients with Fragile X. They have Genetics, Developmental Pediatrician and OT services and with our input hopefully more services in the future. The group joins together semi-annually for parent support, events and activities. Please join our email list to get information on programs in the area and the latest information available about Fragile X.

**CONTACT:** Denise, 413-584-1859

**EMAIL:** [FRXRCofWMASS@aol.com](mailto:FRXRCofWMASS@aol.com)

**Friends With Heart:** A new support group for parents of children with congenital heart conditions, meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month from 7-9PM at UMass Medical Center, 55 Lake Avenue North, Worcester. There are also quarterly informative meetings with a guest speaker. Call for details and directions.

**CONTACT:** Dawn King, 508-842-1636

**EMAIL:** [dawnking@townisp.com](mailto:dawnking@townisp.com)

**Kids with Tubes:** Online support group and information for parents and caregivers of children who are tube-fed.

**WEBSITE:** [www.kidswithtubes.org](http://www.kidswithtubes.org)

**Prader-Willi Syndrome Association of New England:** Provides information and support, quarterly parent support groups, family recreation events, conferences every other year, parent sharing list of parents who can be contacted for support, and newsletter. E-mail for details.

**E-MAIL:** [info@pwsane.org](mailto:info@pwsane.org)

**WEBSITE:** [www.pwsane.org](http://www.pwsane.org)

**Sanfilippo Mothers Group:** Meetings will occur monthly at 7:00 P.M. in Needham. Call for details about meeting format and location. All families are welcome.

**CONTACT:** Mary-Frances, [mfgcgc@yahoo.com](mailto:mfgcgc@yahoo.com)

**Scotty Luce Coalition for Family Preservation:** Support group for parents of children with severe medical, physical and cognitive delays. Call for more information.

**CONTACT:** Tricia Luce, 508-831-0999

**Spina Bifida Association of Massachusetts:** Spina Bifida Association hosts a listserv for families who have loved ones with Spina Bifida.

**CONTACT:** 888-479-1900

**LISTSERV:** <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/MSBAParents/>

**Tourette Syndrome Association, Inc.:** TSA offers resources and referrals to help people living with Tourette Syndrome. Massachusetts Chapter meets at 16 Fieldstone Way, Plymouth and also offers online and over the phone support. Additional support sites can be arranged.

**CONTACT:** 617-277-7589

**E-MAIL:** [info@tsa-ma.org](mailto:info@tsa-ma.org)

**TrachCare, Inc.:** Statewide group offering resources, support, and referrals to parents of children of all ages who have a tracheostomy. Phone support and occasional group meetings.

**CONTACT:** Julie Leahy, 617- 527-1990

**E-MAIL:** [info@trachcare.org](mailto:info@trachcare.org)

**Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance of New England:** It offers resources and referrals to help people and adults living with Tuberous Sclerosis and their families. It includes members of the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. For events and meetings please contact Karin Sullivan, Chair.

**CONTACT:** Karin Sullivan

**E-MAIL:** [mrsqumby56@comcast.net](mailto:mrsqumby56@comcast.net)

**WEBSITE:** [www.ntsaa.org](http://www.ntsaa.org)

**Turner Syndrome Society of America:** It offers resources and referrals that allow peer or professional led groups offer emotional support and social interaction to help people and adults living with Turner Syndrome. Contact the New England Chapter (Mass. and Rhode Island), below.

**CONTACT:** Deborah Pomerantz, 401-732-2136

**E-MAIL:** [deb\\_pomerantz@hotmail.com](mailto:deb_pomerantz@hotmail.com)

**WEBSITE:** [www.turnersyndrome.org](http://www.turnersyndrome.org)

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

**Support Network for Families and Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PAL):** Support groups (English and Spanish) provide resources, trainings and parent to parent support and friendships for families with children/adolescents who have mental, behavioral, or emotional health care needs. Check website for details of support groups throughout the region.

**CONTACT:** Pauline Curry 413-536-2401 x 3007

**EMAIL:** [pcurry@wmtcinfo.org](mailto:pcurry@wmtcinfo.org)

**WEBSITE:** <http://wmtcinfo.org/programs/advocacy/support-network/>

**NAMI-Berkshire County:** Groups to support the needs of families of children with emotional challenges. Call for more details.

Pittsfield:

Meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at Berkshire Medical Center (private dining room next to cafeteria), 275 North Street, Pittsfield at 6:30PM.

South County:

Meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at Mason Library 231 Main Street, Great Barrington at 6:30PM.

Williamstown:

Meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at St. John's Episcopal Church, 35 Park Street at 6:30PM.

**CONTACT:** NAMI-BC, Brenda 413-443-1666

**EMAIL:** bgarcia@namibc.org

**NAMI-WM Peer Education Groups:** Support groups for families and friends of people with mental illnesses. Staff who have had years of experience with mental illness, either directly or as family members of an ill person, facilitate the group. Groups are intended to offer emotional support and information. People present have varying degrees of experience and knowledge about mental illness. Call for details of meeting times and locations.

**CONTACT:** NAMI-Western Mass, 413-786-9139

**WEBSITE:** <http://namiwm.org>

## **OTHER**

**Making Healthy Connections:** Opportunity for adolescents and young adults (ages 14 – 22 years) to come together at the Greek Cultural Center, 22 Saint George Road, Springfield to socialize and build relationships. The group focuses on issues of transition to adulthood.

**CONTACT:** Susan, 413-584-0455

**Wheeling Wonders:** A support group for children using wheelchairs or physically challenged. Call for more information.

**CONTACT:** Mary Varteresian, 978-928-5655 or Chris Haley, 978-874-0187

## **SIBLING SUPPORT**

**Sibling Program:** Brothers and sisters come together to talk about their experiences and share information and resources. Meets for 6 sessions at Pediatric Development Center, Pittsfield. Call for meeting schedule.

**CONTACT:** Dianne Farella, 413-499-4537