



# Autism Connections

a Pathlight program

SUPPORT

RESOURCES

INFORMATION

Autism Connections provides support to individuals with autism and their families by fostering community collaboration, support for inclusion, and understanding of autism through a qualified and experienced staff.



## About Autism Connections

Autism Connections was founded in 1989 by parents of children with autism. Our goal is to help families, schools, professionals, agencies, and communities understand autism, promote the well-being of individuals with autism, and foster their inclusion in the community.

We help families build on their strengths, work together to create a positive vision for the future, and help children learn, grow, and be welcomed, fully included members of their communities.

Autism Connections is directed by parents and other family members in partnership with autism professionals and other concerned citizens.

## Overview of Services

Autism Connections provides the following services to children and adults with autism, their families, friends, and professionals in western Massachusetts:

### \* Autism Center

- Information and Referral
  - Monthly newsletter
  - Resource center
  - Information packets on a variety of autism related topics
  - Online resource and referral directory
  - Young adult and adult connections/support and social skills groups
  - Parent-parent connections and support groups
  - Education Advocacy (fee-based)
  - Social, sensory, and recreational activities
  - Education and training: workshops and small group clinics (free)
  - Annual Autism Conference
  - Training for schools and other organizations (fee-based)
  - Family and community focused events

### \* Direct Services

(by Department of Developmental Services referral)

- Individualized adult and child family-based supports
- Intensive family supports
- Children's Waiver Program
- Agency with Choice





Our program includes training in how to seek out experiences in the community that interest each student, giving them access to the same opportunities as their typical peers.

## Contact Us

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## What is Autism?

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first two years of life. It is the result of a neurological disorder that affects development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

Autism may affect an individual's ability to:

- communicate
- relate to people
- respond to pain, touch, sound, and taste
- learn and think in typical ways

It is estimated that autism occurs in as many as 1 in 68 individuals—more than 1.5 million people in the United States. Autism knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries; family income levels; lifestyle choices; or educational levels, and can affect any family and any child. And although the overall incidence of autism is consistent around the globe, it is diagnosed four times more often in boys than in girls.



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### About Pathlight

#### Autism Connections is a Pathlight program

Pathlight is a 501(c)3 non-profit Massachusetts corporation with offices in Pittsfield, Springfield, Greenfield, Easthampton, and Hadley. It was founded in 1952 by five mothers of children with developmental disabilities.

The majority of Pathlight's revenue comes through state agencies, including the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services and the Massachusetts Department of Medical Assistance. Pathlight also raises money from a broad network of generous donors. We gratefully accept support from individuals, businesses, and foundations.