



The QPAC Resource

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The Newsletter of the Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education

Working towards the best education for all students within the Quincy Public Schools

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Parents Rights and Responsibilities

Our 2011-2012 presentation series continues on December 8th with *Parents Rights and Responsibilities*! This interactive workshop will explore the special education process, including evaluations, IEPs, Team meetings, resolving disputes, and many other topics. Participants are encouraged to bring their questions!

Parents Rights and Responsibilities will begin at 6:30 pm, sharp, at Quincy High School. It is free and open to the public, and light refreshments will be served! As always we request that you RSVP for this workshop; your registration ensures that we have enough seats, handouts, and refreshments! You can reserve your spot on our website, at <http://www.quincypac.org/rsvp.html>. You may also register by contacting Jill Gichuhi, QPAC President..

Other upcoming events include *Avenues to Success* on January 23rd, *An IEP for my Child* on February 9th, *Accessing Community Supports and Services* on March 2nd, and *Understanding Educational Evaluations* on April 12th. And make sure to mark your calendar for our Spring Social, coming up on June 7th! Check our website for more information on these events, as well as for any updates: <http://www.quincypac.org/calendar/presentations.html>.

Also make sure to visit our website for additional events occurring in and around Quincy: <http://www.quincypac.org/resources/communityevents.html>!

Need Resources?

We are pleased to announce that all of our Resource Sheets have been updated! What are Resource Sheets, you ask? They are helpful lists of articles, guides, websites, books, and other materials on subjects relating to special education and disabilities. Topics include Augmentative Communication and Assistive Technology, Behavior and Bullying, IEPs, Reading, and Transition to Adulthood. Disabilities such as Autism, Sensory Disorders, Emotional Impairments, and Learning Disabilities are also included. QPAC's Resource Sheets can be downloaded from our website, at <http://www.quincypac.org/resources/resources.html>.

Our Resource Sheets are by no means comprehensive. Individuals looking for additional materials on these or other topics are encouraged to stop by our Resource Center! We maintain an extensive database of information and resources, and are always happy to help you find what you need! The QPAC Resource Center will be open on the following dates and times:

Mornings, 8:30 am - 11:30 am

- Friday, December 2nd
- Friday, January 6th
- Friday, February 3rd

Evenings, 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm

- Monday, December 19th
- Monday, January 30th
- Monday, February 27th

The Resource Center is also open at 5:30 pm, prior to General Meetings and evening presentations. Additional hours may be available by appointment. Visit our website for more information: <http://www.quincypac.org/about/resourcecenter.html>.

Meet Mark Poli

Quincy Public Schools is home to many amazing teachers, therapists, administrators, and other staff members working every day with and for our kids! QPAC will introduce you to one of these staff members in each issue of our newsletter. This issue features Mark Poli, teacher in the Children Achieve Real Educational Success (CARES) program. QPAC asked Mr. Poli some questions about his work in QPS, and here are his answers...

Q: What is your job and what does it involve?

A: I am a teacher in a CARES classroom at the Squantum Elementary School. My class is designed to serve students (K-2) diagnosed with Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorders. I am responsible for designing lessons to address each student's individual IEP goals/objectives and curriculum based activities.

Q: How long have you worked for Quincy Public Schools?

A: I'm happy to say this is my twelfth year being employed by Quincy Public Schools. When I first joined QPS, I worked as a Professional Tutor in the CARES program. I had the opportunity to work with children at both the preschool and lower elementary levels. I assumed the role of teacher in September 2009.

Q: What is the best part of your job?

A: The most rewarding part of my job is watching the students acquire new skills and then utilize those skills independently.

Q: What is the most challenging part of your job?

A: The most challenging aspect of my job is learning to balance numerous individual scheduling requirements, while maintaining a consistent and predictable classroom routine.

Q: If you could have any job, what would it be?

A: If for some reason I could not continue in my current position, I would apply for the Manager's job with the Red Sox (I hear they are hiring).

Q: What is your educational background and training?

A: Like many Special Educators, I did not directly enter the teaching profession. I hold a Masters in Business Administration and worked in that capacity for many years within the high tech industry. Seeking a change, I applied to become a Professional Tutor with QPS in the fall of 2000. Initially, I believed I would be tutoring students in need of additional instruction in mathematics. To my surprise, and good fortune, I was offered a position in the CARES program. I thoroughly enjoyed the work. After a few years, I began exploring the possibility of becoming a teacher. I became licensed in 2009 and completed my Master's of Special Education (Moderate Disabilities) in early 2010.

Q: Are you originally from Quincy?

A: No. I am originally from East Boston, however, I have lived in Quincy for almost 25 years.

Q: What is one fun or interesting fact about you?

A: I am a huge baseball fan and have been coaching for 22 years.

As Mr. Poli noted, the CARES program serves students with Autism and similar disorders. It provides a highly-structured program for students who require a substantially-separate classroom environment.

Mr. Poli is just one of many dedicated teachers and staff working in this program, which also has classrooms at the Della Chiesa Early Childhood Center, Snug Harbor Community School, Sterling Middle School, and North Quincy High School.

Contributions Wanted!

Got something to say? QPAC wants to hear it! We are looking for contributions from parents and other individuals for upcoming issues of The QPAC Resource. Submissions should be on an issue or topic relevant to Quincy parents of children with disabilities, and be no more than 500 words in length (we may edit for size and clarity). Contact Jill Gichuhi, QPAC President, if interested.



Mark Poli
Special Education Teacher
CARES Program

Funding Services for Children with Autism

An Act Relative to Insurance Coverage for Autism (ARICA) requires certain health insurers in Massachusetts to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs), including Autistic Disorder, Asperger Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). Here is a brief overview of ARICA and other options for funding services.

ARICA: Private Insurers, HMOs, and the GIC

ARICA applies to private health insurance providers, Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs), Hospital Service Plans, and Group Insurance Commission policies. It requires designated plans and policies to cover medically necessary treatments, including habilitative and rehabilitative care (such as Applied Behavioral Analysis - ABA), pharmacy care, psychiatric and psychological care, and therapeutic care such as speech, occupational, and physical therapy.

Health plans cannot include any service limitation that is less than that imposed on physical conditions. As with all benefits, carriers may review requests for services for individuals with ASDs, and may limit or deny such services if they are not found to be medically necessary. Families have the right to appeal such determinations.

For more information:

- Autism Insurance Resource Center <http://www.disabilityinfo.org/arica/>
- Massachusetts Division of Insurance <http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/government/oca-agencies/doi-lp/>

ERISA: Self-Funded Plans

ARICA does not apply to self-funded policies, such as those provided by large employers, which are regulated by the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). Many ERISA plans do, however, cover some or all of the services required under ARICA. For more information, contact your employer or insurance provider.

MassHealth

ARICA also does not apply to MassHealth. Like many ERISA policies, MassHealth does provide coverage for most ARICA-mandated services if they are deemed medically-necessary. MassHealth may also help families pay for the cost of insurance policies subject to ARICA, through the Family Assistance Program, if the treatment is a service covered by MassHealth.

Children and youth under the age of 21 with MassHealth Standard or Commonwealth may also be eligible for services under the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), if they have a co-occurring mental health disorder. CBHI offers a range of home and community-based emotional and behavioral health services, including outpatient and in-home therapy, care coordination, in-home behavioral services, family support and training, therapeutic mentoring, and mobile crisis intervention. Children with other MassHealth plans may be eligible for select CBHI services.

Parents of children under the age of 9 may also apply for the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver, a program administered by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Each year, a limited number of kids are served through this program, which provides services to help children with autism remain in their homes and actively participate in their community. Services may include one-to-one interventions to improve behavioral, self-care, adaptive, communication, social, or play skills, recreation, and/or respite.

For more information:

- MassHealth Coverage Types <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/insurance/masshealth-coverage-types/under-65-and-families/>
- CBHI Information <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/masshealth/cbhi/brochure-metro-boston.pdf>
- Autism Waiver Information <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/services-by-type/intellectual-disability/support/autism-spectrum/developmental-services-autism-waiver-services.html>

Resource Roundup: Autism

Does your child have autism? Check out these excellent autism-related resources:

- ▶ *A Parent's Guide to Assessment*: Wondering what kind of testing your child will need, what it will test, or who will do the testing? Download this easy-to-read guide from the Organization for Autism Research! <http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/documents/AssessmentGuide.pdf>
- ▶ *Autism Now*: The home of the National Autism Resource & Information Center, this website offers info on Autism Spectrum Disorders in the areas of home, school and community. <http://autismnow.org/>
- ▶ *Autism After 16*: Have a child nearing their transition to adulthood? This new website offers information about this critical time, by and for young adults with autism and their families. <http://www.autismafter16.com/>

Looking for information on Asperger Syndrome? Check out these awesome Asperger-related resources:

- ▶ *An Educator's Guide to Asperger Syndrome*: Another great guide from the Organization for Autism Research, this is an excellent resource to share with your child's teachers! <http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/documents/EducatorsAsperger.pdf>
- ▶ *Asperger Association of New England*: AANE is a Massachusetts-based organization offering information, support, and education to individuals with Aspergers, their parents, and the professionals who work with them. <http://www.aane.org/>

Upcoming Meetings

QPAC has several upcoming meetings. We hope to see you there!

- ◆ *QPAC General Meeting*: January 17th, 6:30 pm at Quincy High School (a QPAC volunteer will be available at 5:30 pm to offer individualized assistance and support) QPAC meets throughout the school year, to discuss our goals and activities, as well as special education programs, policies, and procedures within Quincy Public Schools. Agendas and Minutes are available on our website: <http://www.quincypac.org/calendar/calendar.html>.
- ◆ *Special Education Subcommittee Meeting*: February 1st, 7:00 pm at Quincy High School The Subcommittee on Special Education provides the School Committee direction on the issues and programs that affect students with disabilities within Quincy Public Schools. Subcommittee meetings are held in conjunction with QPAC and Quincy Public Schools administration. Visit our website for more information: http://www.quincypac.org/calendar/calendar.html#Special_Education_Subcommittee.
- ◆ *Come To Think Of It Meeting*: date to be determined, 6:30 pm at Christ Church, Quincy Are you struggling to raise a child with behavior issues? Do you spent your nights worried about tomorrow's behaviors or dread the next call from the school? You are not alone. Join other parents with similar concerns for Come To Think Of It, a parent-to-parent group for those raising children with challenging behaviors. Visit our website for additional information and resources: <http://www.quincypac.org/calendar/group.html>.

QPAC Contacts

Contact us! We are always happy to field your questions, comments, or concerns about QPAC or special education!

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