Brightway Living & Learning
School Age Program
Social Work Newsletter
November 2026

REMINDER:

SCHOOL IS CLOSED

NOV. 3RD STAFF CONFERENCE DAY

NOV. 11TH VETERAN'S DAY

NOV 26TH & 27TH THANKSGIVING

Parent Training
with Karrie Lindeman
Topic: Preparing for the holidays
Date: Nov 23rd at 8pm
Zoom Meeting ID:
330 049 6591
Meeting Passcode: Sammy

Informational Links

News 12 Long Island
NYSED
OPWDD Front Door
Social Security
Disability Benefits
Virtual Backpack

Autism Spectrum Disorder Foundation is offering a Holiday Gift Card program. Please review the enclosed flyer from Harbor & Heart Care Connections

LP & HD are having a food drive to support our community. A flyer will be sent home via your child's backpack.

Smithtown Performing Arts Center Presents Disney Frozen Jr. Sensory Performance on Friday, December 4th at 7PM. See the enclosed flyer for additional information.

Check out Parent to Parent of NYS Events Calendar for upcoming workshops. Click here.

Please review the enclosed flyers from Harbor & Heart Care Connection:
What Families Should Know about Medicaid, Family Support Services and OPWDD vs. C-YES Two Different Pathways

HARBOR & HEART CARE CONNECTIONS

Connecting Extraordinary Care with Extraordinary Families.

Support Resources Stronger Tomorrows



AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER FOUNDATION (ASDF)

Holiday Gift Card Program

HELPING AUTISM FAMILIES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

APPLICATIONS OPEN
November 2, 2026

APPLICATIONS CLOSE
November 16, 2026

No Documentation Needed to Apply

You do NOT need to submit autism documentation when applying for a Holiday Gift Card.

Random Selection

Recipients are randomly chosen to receive a Holiday Gift Card.

Documentation Required If Selected

If you are selected, you will need to provide documentation confirming your child has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis before funds are provided.

Optional Follow-Up

Selected families may be asked to submit a photo or short video of their family, along with a brief description of how the gift card has positively impacted their holiday season. Participation is encouraged, but not mandatory.

A little support can make a big difference.

LEARN MORE & APPLY
https://myasdf.org/project/holiday-gift-card-program/

STRONGER FAMILIES | BRIGHTER FUTURES | INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES | SUPPORT ALWAYS

FOLLOW HARBOR & HEART CARE CONNECTIONS
for more autism resources, grants, financial assistance programs and special-needs supports for families.

SENSORY SENSITIVE

Disney

FROZEN JR.

SENSORY PERFORMANCE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4TH 7PM

SMITHTOWN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

TICKETS: SMITHTOWNPAC.ORG

SENSORY FRIENDLY/RELAXED MEANS ARTS ACCESS FOR ALL.

REDUCTION OF SOUND LEVELS, PARTICULARLY LOUD OR STARTLING SOUNDS. REDUCTION OF OVERWHELMING STAGE LIGHTING. LOW AMBIENT LIGHTING IN THE THEATER THROUGHOUT THE PERFORMANCE SO PATRONS ARE ABLE TO SEE SHOULD THEY NEED TO MOVE AROUND OR EXIT THE THEATER.

HARBOR & HEART CARE CONNECTIONS

MEDICAID FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

NASSAU & SUFFOLK COUNTY

WHAT FAMILIES SHOULD KNOW

Support ♥ Guidance ♥ Resources ♥ Community

EXPLORE
SUPPORT
NAVIGATE
CONNECT
BELONG

1 WHO CAN GET MEDICAID?

Children with special needs may qualify for Medicaid based on their disability, income and household situation. Medicaid can help cover important **medical, therapies, equipment and home and community services.**

2 TWO WAYS TO QUALIFY

- **Income-Based Medicaid**
  For children from lower income households.
- **Disability-Based Medicaid**
  For children who meet disability criteria, regardless of parental income in many cases.

3 WHAT IT CAN HELP COVER

- Doctor visits
- Specialty care
- Therapies (PT, OT, ST, ABA and more)
- Medical equipment (like adaptive beds, wheelchairs, etc.)
- Home care services (C-YES/HCBS)
- Prescriptions
- Mental health services
- And more

4 HOW TO APPLY

- Apply online through New York State of Health or your Local Department of Social Services.
- Provide required documents (income, residency, disability information, etc.).
- You can also explore waivers and programs such as C-YES, HCBS and OPWDD for additional services.

5 YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

The process can be overwhelming, but there are resources and support available. Families can connect with care managers, advocates and local organizations for guidance.

NEED HELP NAVIGATING MEDICAID?

I offer 1:1 navigation services to help families with applications, referrals, documents and understanding available programs.

PRIVATE MESSAGE
for 1:1 Navigation Services

EDUCATE · CONNECT · SUPPORT · EMPOWER · STRONGER TOGETHER

Services provide navigation, education, application/referral assistance, document support, and advocacy support only. Harbor & Heart Care Connections does not determine eligibility, make agency/insurance decisions, or guarantee Medicaid, C-YES/HCBS, OPWDD services, equipment, grants, funding, benefits, or any other approval/outcome.

HARBOR & HEART CARE CONNECTIONS

Connecting Extraordinary Care with Extraordinary Families.

RESOURCES ♥ GUIDANCE ♥ CONNECTION ♥ SUPPORT

DAY 24

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES (FSS): WHO CAN ACTUALLY USE IT?

There's a common misconception that Family Support Services (FSS) are only for children with provisional OPWDD eligibility.
That's not the rule.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR FSS?

According to OPWDD, to be eligible for FSS, a person generally must:

- Have **established OPWDD eligibility**
- Live at home with one or more **unpaid family members or unpaid caregivers**

You do NOT have to be enrolled in Medicaid to receive FSS.

PROVISIONAL VS. FULL OPWDD ELIGIBILITY

- Children with **PROVISIONAL** eligibility can receive FSS.
- FSS is **NOT** exclusively a provisional service. Individuals with established/**FULL** OPWDD eligibility may also qualify when they meet the FSS requirements.
- OPWDD allows existing FSS supports to continue when a child's provisional eligibility is being reassessed to help prevent a lapse in services.

WHAT CAN FSS INCLUDE?

Programs vary by region and availability, but FSS may include:

- Family Reimbursement
- Respite
- Recreation & Camp
- Parent & Sibling Support
- Family Counseling & Training
- Behavioral Supports
- Social Skills Training
- Specialized Equipment & Home Modifications
- Transportation
- Information, Referral & Service Access

WHAT ABOUT FAMILY REIMBURSEMENT?

- FSS Family Reimbursement is intended to help with eligible disability-related goods or services when another funding source is not available.
- Families may first need to explore other possible funding sources—including insurance, Medicaid, HCBS Waiver funding or Self-Direction, when applicable.
- Rules and availability can vary by region and FSS provider. Always ask what applies to your specific situation. ♥

HAVING SELF-DIRECTION?

- Having Self-Direction does **NOT** automatically make someone ineligible for FSS.
- However, OPWDD requires available Self-Direction funding mechanisms to be explored before FSS reimbursement can be used.
- FSS cannot simply duplicate an item or service already covered by the Self-Direction budget.
- There are additional funding rules. If another source can pay for the need, FSS reimbursement may not be available. ♥

HARBOR & HEART TIP

Don't assume you're ineligible for FSS because your loved one has full OPWDD eligibility, has Medicaid, or receives other services. ♥

Ask what FSS programs are available in your region, what eligibility requirements apply to the specific program, and whether another funding source must be pursued first. ♥

SAVE & SHARE *with another NY family navigating OPWDD.*

Knowledge is power. Connection is strength.
YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Follow Harbor & Heart Care Connections for more resources, guidance and support along the way. ♥

Harbor & Heart Care Connections provides educational resource information and does not replace guidance from OPWDD, your Care Manager, Support Broker, Fiscal Intermediary or other authorized professionals. Requirements and availability can vary based on the service and individual circumstances. Always confirm your specific situation. ♥

OPWDD vs. C-YES

Two Different Pathways.

One Goal: Helping Families Access Support.

Many New York families hear about OPWDD but have never been told about C-YES. While both programs may help children with disabilities, they have different eligibility requirements and application processes.

SUPPORT
GUIDANCE
RESOURCES
COMMUNITY
BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

	OPWDD Office for People With Developmental Disabilities For individuals with qualifying developmental disabilities	C-YES Children and Youth Evaluation Services For children and youth who are not enrolled in Medicaid
WHO QUALIFIES?	✓ A qualifying developmental disability that began before age 22 ✓ Expected to continue indefinitely ✓ Substantial functional limitations in at least 3 areas of major life activity	✓ Children and youth under age 21 ✓ Who are not enrolled in Medicaid ✓ May qualify for New York's Children's Waiver based on specific medical, behavioral, developmental, or other qualifying criteria
WHAT SUPPORTS MAY BE AVAILABLE?	✓ Respite ✓ Family support services ✓ Community habilitation ✓ Recreational and social opportunities ✓ Other individualized supports (depending on eligibility and available funding)	✓ Respite ✓ Community habilitation ✓ Caregiver and family supports ✓ Other individualized home- and community-based services (through the Children's Waiver, depending on eligibility)
HOW TO APPLY?	✓ Submit an OPWDD eligibility packet ✓ Include required evaluations and documentation ✓ Work with the Front Door (Region 5: 631-434-6000) ✓ If denied, you may have appeal rights	✓ Request a C-YES evaluation through your Health Home or local referral source ✓ Complete required assessments ✓ Evaluation determines potential eligibility for the Children's Waiver
IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW	• OPWDD eligibility does not automatically mean approval for the OPWDD HCBS Waiver. • There are waitlists for waiver services. • A child does not need an autism diagnosis, but must meet OPWDD eligibility criteria.	• C-YES is an evaluation and referral pathway, not a separate waiver. • A child does not need OPWDD eligibility to be considered for the Children's Waiver. • Services are based on individual needs and available funding.

HOW HARBOR & HEART CAN HELP

We help families understand both pathways, organize supporting documentation, and navigate application and referral requirements with more clarity and confidence.

- General educational information is **free.**
- Optional individualized navigation, application assistance, and document preparation are paid services.
- Official OPWDD and C-YES applications and agency assistance are **free.** You do not need to hire a private service to apply.

Have questions about where to begin? SEND US A PRIVATE MESSAGE >

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Harbor & Heart Care Connections
Connecting Extraordinary Care with Extraordinary Families.

Evidence-Based. Family-Centered. Compassion-Driven.

Harbor & Heart provides resource navigation, education, referral and application assistance, document support, and advocacy support. We are not affiliated with OPWDD, C-YES, Medicaid, or any other agency or program. Eligibility and service decisions are made by the appropriate agencies; outcomes cannot be guaranteed.