



**Autism Spectrum  
Support Group**  
of Southern Maryland

**Web:** [www.autismsupport-somd.org](http://www.autismsupport-somd.org)

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*Families helping families.*

**November 2013 Newsletter**  
Volume 3, Issue 3

# Calendar of Events



**November 7, 2013 -- Autism Support Group Meeting in Calvert County** (Parent Connections Support Group of Calvert County/Autism Spectrum Support Group of SoMD), 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., at the Hunting Creek Annex, 4105 Old Town Rd., Huntingtown, MD 20639 (in the old school building kittycorner from the Fire Department). Please RSVP: 410-535-7387 or [parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us](mailto:parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us).

**November 7, 2013 -- IEP Clinic** with Missy Alexander, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. This workshop will go over basic IEP information and an IEP review. It will be held at the F.B. Gwynn Center at 5998 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD 20646. Please RSVP to [pfs@ccboe.com](mailto:pfs@ccboe.com) or call 301-934-7456.

**November 13, 2013 -- Calvert County Partners for Success/Parent Connections Workshop "Common Core Math Strategies,"** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Multipurpose Room, 1305 Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick, MD 20678. Is your child bringing home "New Math"? Come learn about instructional strategies that are being done in the classrooms and learn how your child is learning math through conceptual understanding instead of rote procedures. We will discuss tools for computing and learn strategies to teach fluency. To register, please email [parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us](mailto:parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us) or call Sue at the Partners for Success/ Parent Connections Resource Center at 410-535-7387.

**November 13, 2013 -- "How Will I Know If My Child Is Making Progress?"** 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., at The Family ACCESS Center, 3665 Hallowing Point Road, #6, Prince Frederick, MD 20678. Children go to school to learn, of course. But parents of children with disabilities often ask, "How will I know my child is learning and making progress?" Parents can answer that question by looking at a variety of data, including information from special education and general education sources and information from outside the school. This workshop will help you answer that question and help you learn what information to gather from special education and general education sources to help your child. Learn about: 1) What data you can look at that will help you understand your child's progress. 2) What questions to ask about your child's progress. 3) What to do if you don't think your child is making progress. Join us for this FREE 2-hour workshop sponsored by the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau, Family ACCess Center. Contact: Cheri Reulet: [creulet@tcysb.org](mailto:creulet@tcysb.org) / 443-975-7459.

**November 14, 2013 -- 504 Workshop** with Missy Alexander, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. This workshop will go over the 504 process. It will be held at the F.B. Gwynn Center at 5998 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD 20646. Please RSVP to [pfs@ccboe.com](mailto:pfs@ccboe.com) or call 301-934-7456.

**November 19, 2013 -- Calvert Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee (SECAC) Meeting,** 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Board of Education office, 1305 Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick, MD. Mrs. Harris, CCPS Director of Special Education, has asked the Calvert SECAC for its assistance in providing a critical review of the plan. With all of the budget struggles we want to be sure to sustain special education staff. In fact, we would like to ask for more staff to meet the needs of our students in Special Education to effectively implement the Common Core State Standards and offer a full continuum of services.

**November 20, 2013 -- Autism Spectrum Support Group Meeting,** 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Coffee Quarter, California, MD.

**November 20, 2013 -- Autism Spectrum Support Group Meeting,** 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the La Plata Panera in Charles County.

**November 20, 2013 -- Sensory Processing Disorder**, 6:30 -8:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Meeting Room, 23160 Moakley St., Leonardtown, MD 20650. SMCPs Occupational Therapist, Julie Grooms, will present information about sensory processing disorder, how it might affect a child in school and at home and activities that parents can do to help their child. To register for these free seminars, please contact Susan Shannon at 301-863-4069 or e-mail [partnersforsuccess@smcps.org](mailto:partnersforsuccess@smcps.org).

**November 21, 2013 -- The Autism-Asperger's Association of Calvert County (AAACC) November Meeting** will feature guest speaker Adam R. Neal, J.D., AAACC Board Member, and Lead Disability Advocate for Disability Advocacy Institute, LLC. Mr. Neal will present information on preparing for upcoming IEP meetings. Please visit the AAACC website at [www.asdcalvert.org](http://www.asdcalvert.org) for more information as it becomes available.

**November 21, 2013 -- 504 Clinic** with Missy Alexander - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. This workshop will go over the 504 process and help parents review their current 504 plans. It will be held at the F.B. Gwynn Center at 5998 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD 20646. Please RSVP to [pfs@ccboe.com](mailto:pfs@ccboe.com) or call 301-934-7456.

**November 22, 2013 -- Special Needs Night at the Calvert Marine Museum**, Solomons, MD, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. The museum will open exclusively for the special needs population and their families to come visit free of charge. Enjoy the stingrays, fish, fossils, otters (for the first hour), maritime history, and fun in a supportive environment. A special calming room will be provided. See the flyer in this newsletter for more information.

**December 4, 2013 -- A Practical Approach to Improving Your Child's Social Skills**, 6:30 -8:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Meeting Room, 23160 Moakley St., Leonardtown, MD 20650. Lisa Dean, SMCPs Instructional Resource Teacher for Autism, will explain why some children with disabilities have difficulty with social situations. She will share practical strategies both parents and teachers can use to help strengthen the social awareness and skills of students with disabilities. These strategies can be used by a child with any disability. To register for these free seminars, please contact Susan Shannon at 301-863-4069 or e-mail [partnersforsuccess@smcps.org](mailto:partnersforsuccess@smcps.org).

**December 4, 2013 -- FBA/BIP Workshop** with Missy Alexander - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. This workshop will go over functional behavioral assessments and behavioral intervention plans. It will be held at the F.B. Gwynn Center at 5998 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD 20646. Please RSVP to [pfs@ccboe.com](mailto:pfs@ccboe.com) or call 301-934-7456.

**December 5, 2013 -- Autism Support Group Meeting in Calvert County** (Parent Connections Support Group of Calvert County/Autism Spectrum Support Group of SoMD), 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., at the Hunting Creek Annex, 4105 Old Town Rd., Huntingtown, MD 20639 (in the old school building kitty-corner from the Fire Department). Please RSVP: 410-535-7387 or [parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us](mailto:parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us).

**December 7, 2013 -- Roundtable Discussion, Part 5**, 2:00 - 4:15 p.m. at the Leonardtown Library, Leonardtown, MD 20650. Join us for the fifth part of the Roundtable Discussion for parents/caregivers of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's counties. The purpose of this meeting is to continue working on courses of action to address problems with educational services in Southern Maryland as identified in the July 29th, August 29th, September 30th, and November 2nd meetings and additional surveys. Even if you didn't attend the other Roundtable Discussions, you are still welcome to attend this meeting. Light refreshments will be provided. Registration is required for this FREE event. Please RSVP to Missy at 301/884-4662 or to Terri at [terri@autismsupport-somd.org](mailto:terri@autismsupport-somd.org), or "Join" the event on our Facebook page.

**December 19, 2013 -- Anxiety in Children and Adolescents**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Guest speaker: Elgiz Bal, Ph.D. of Chesapeake ADHD Center of Maryland - Dr. Bal is a licensed clinical psychologist and specializes in diagnosis and treatment of children, adolescents and college students with diverse difficulties, including ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, academic concerns, anxiety, depression, adjustment issues, and behavior problems. She provides comprehensive evaluations of children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders, attentional and executive function difficulties, academic problems, social and emotional concerns, and behavior problems. Assessments focus on identifying areas of each child's strength and weakness as well as assisting with effective treatment planning. To assure comprehensive care, Dr. Bal closely works with caregivers, healthcare providers, and school personnel. She is available to attend IEP and 504 Plan meetings to communicate evaluation results and recommendations and to help with the development of appropriate academic supports. This workshop will look at the affects of anxiety on your child's behavior at school and at home and ways to cope with anxiety in your child or adolescent. The workshop will be held at the F.B. Gwynn Center at 5998 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD 20646. Please RSVP to [pfs@ccboe.com](mailto:pfs@ccboe.com), [lysaware@aol.com](mailto:lysaware@aol.com), or call 301-934-7456.

**Date/Time/Location to Be Determined -- Breakout Roundtable Discussion about Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**. After an information session on what ABA is, who can benefit from it, what qualifications providers should have, and similar information, participants will be invited to share their positive and problem experiences with ABA services in the three Southern Maryland Counties. Participants would be welcome to join the ABA Focus Group of the Roundtable Discussions.



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# Roundtable Discussions Continue, Changes Happening



The Autism Spectrum Support Group of Southern Maryland has held a series of Roundtable Discussions (RTDs) to identify positives and problems with educational services for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) in all three Southern Maryland counties. Once data were collected and analyzed, trends were uncovered. Participants determined which problem areas would be the first to be addressed and broke into focus groups to begin working on them.

## Special Transportation Changes in St. Mary's County

The first problem area identified was a transportation issue happening in St. Mary's County. SMCPS students with disabilities who require and receive special transportation are having their school days shortened for *transportation* issues unrelated to disability. This appears to be a systemic practice in place for students requiring special transportation regardless of a documented/justified need for a shortened school day. Whether students on special transportation arrive after the morning bell or are dismissed prior to their non-disabled peers, the practice is discriminatory and, in some cases, is in violation of a student's IEP.

The Transportation Focus Group presented SMCPS officials with its Findings Report, which included the problem stated in detail (including that students being dismissed early were losing *30-45 hours of classroom instruction per year*), a summary of the observations and the data that were collected, a description and analysis of the results, legal precedents outlining the discriminatory nature of the practice, and the request for the resolution of this problem. (The Findings Report of the Transportation Focus Group is available upon request by contacting [info@autismsupport-somd.org](mailto:info@autismsupport-somd.org).)

SMCPS officials were quick to respond, and a meeting was held between members of the Transportation Focus Group and central office administrators (the Deputy Superintendent of Schools, the Executive Director of Special Education and Student Services, and the Director of Transportation). By the time of the October 30, 2013 meeting, the special education director and transportation director had already met with school principals, IEP chairpersons, and special

transportation bus drivers, focusing on the *immediacy* and the *importance* of making changes such that no student would be dismissed early for transportation reasons without documentation in the IEP.

Resolving the problem is complex. School site issues, bus routes, and school administrative and staffing issues all play a part. While parents of children riding special transportation in St. Mary's County should already have been informed of any changes to afternoon dismissal times and should be seeing appropriate changes to instructional time and to arrival times at home, some work may be needed to smooth out kinks or to address problems that may have arisen from the changes. Additionally, late arrivals in the morning are not currently being addressed systemically as the school system first focuses on early dismissals in the afternoons.

If your child is experiencing any special transportation issues, the Director of Transportation, Mr. Thompson, recommends that parents begin at the school level as each building has an administrator who "liaises" with the transportation department.

However, he said that it is appropriate to contact his department, too: Jeffrey Thompson, Director of Transportation, St. Mary's County Public Schools, (301) 475-4256 ext 2 / [jkthompson@smcps.org](mailto:jkthompson@smcps.org).

The Autism Spectrum Support Group of Southern Maryland is grateful to St. Mary's County Public Schools for its collaborative, cooperative approach and speed in resolving the issue of shortened school days for students riding special transportation.

## Additional Special Transportation Changes

As part of the October 30, 2013 meeting with central office administrators, a few other transportation issues were clarified:

- ◇ In the past, the need for special transportation had been documented under "Supplementary Aids and Services." It will now be correctly documented under "Related Services" in the IEP.
- ◇ Confusion continues regarding house stops vs. neighborhood stops for children riding special transportation. School system officials clarified

that the IEP team determines whether a student requires a house stop; if s/he doesn't, then the student's official stop is the stop that s/he would have if riding the regular bus for that neighborhood. The need for special transportation is documented in the IEP. House stop vs. regular stop should be part of the discussion. However, the decision is a check box on a transportation form, which parents do not see, and is *not* on the IEP itself. Therefore, this information must be communicated to parents and captured in IEP meeting notes.

- ◊ Parents have reported that they do not consistently receive a phone call from their child's special transportation driver/aide prior to the start of school or start of transportation service advising them of pick-up information. The transportation director stated that such calls are expected to be made, and he has taken steps to address the need for such calls with identified drivers. Parents should also expect similar communication if any changes to the route are anticipated.
- ◊ Every school has an administrator who gives the signal for general buses to depart. However, most schools do not have the same for special buses. (This may be a contributor to why some buses have left without all their students aboard.) The special education director will re-emphasize with schools that a school site administrator will dismiss the special buses.

### **Shortened School Days Due to Special Transportation in Calvert, Charles Counties**

If children with ASDs in Calvert or Charles Counties are experiencing shortened school days, the Transportation Focus Group would be happy to share its experience in St. Mary's County in order to bring a similar resolution to the problem in those counties. Please join us at RTD5 or contact us at [info@autismsupport-somd.org](mailto:info@autismsupport-somd.org).

### **Roundtable Discussion, Part 5**

Part 5 of the Autism Spectrum Support Group's Roundtable Discussion will be held on Saturday, December 7, 2013 at the Leonardtown Library, 2:00 - 4:15 p.m. Focus groups will again present work completed to date, including any resolutions to identified educational problems. It's not too late to join a focus group; please contact Tracie ([tracie@autismsupport-somd.org](mailto:tracie@autismsupport-somd.org)) for topics. As problems are resolved, new focus groups may form to address other problems. More details may be found in the Calendar of Events section of this newsletter.

Another task set for RTD5 is to formalize the positives with educational services collected from parents/caregivers of people with ASDs in all three counties. Additional positives may be submitted to [terri@autismsupport-somd.org](mailto:terri@autismsupport-somd.org)

### **Breakout Roundtable Discussion on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**

Another major area identified in the initial data collection of the Roundtable Discussions is the provision -- or not -- of ABA services through the school systems. Aside from the identified fact that ABA is not mentioned or offered at IEP meetings but has to be brought up by parents and then fought for when refused by school teams, there is a lack of understanding of what ABA is, whom it can help, and how and by whom it should be administered.

Join us on a date to be determined for a special breakout session of the Roundtable Discussion series focusing just on ABA. After an information session on what ABA is, who can benefit from it, what qualifications providers should have, and similar information, participants will be invited to share their positive and problem experiences with ABA services in the three Southern Maryland Counties. Participants would be welcome to join the ABA Focus Group of the Roundtable Discussions.



## **Monthly Autism Support Group Meetings now held in St. Mary's, Charles, and Calvert Counties!**

(See the Calendar of Events for details.)



# Conference Scholarships Available

The Autism Spectrum Support Group of Southern Maryland offers scholarships for family members/caregivers to attend autism-related conferences and workshops. We ask in return that you submit a write-up of a few paragraphs about the experience for inclusion in the next Newsletter or that you share your experience at the next Support Group Meeting (3rd Wednesday of every month in St. Mary's and Charles, 1st Thursday in Calvert). For further information about conference scholarships, contact us at [info@autismsupport-somd.org](mailto:info@autismsupport-somd.org).



The poster features a white central box with logos for Calvert Marine Museum and Calvert County Parks & Recreation Therapeutic Recreation Services. The event title 'Special Needs Night' is in large blue script. Below it, the date 'Friday, November 22, 2013' and time '5:00 to 7:00 p.m.' are listed, along with the location 'at the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons, Maryland'. A row of four photos shows children and adults engaged in various activities. A text box contains bullet points about the event's features, contact information, and a 'FREE!' callout. The bottom of the poster shows silhouettes of people walking.

**CALVERT MARINE MUSEUM** & **Calvert County Parks & Recreation Therapeutic Recreation Services**

## Special Needs Night

Friday, November 22, 2013  
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
at the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons, Maryland

- The museum will open exclusively for the special needs population and their families to come visit free of charge.
- Enjoy the stingrays, fish, fossils, otters (for the first hour), maritime history, and fun in a supportive environment.
- A special calming room will be provided.

For more information, call the Therapeutic Recreation Office  
At (410) 535-1600 or (301) 855-1243 Allison- ext 2542 Joy-ext 2675  
Via email at [trservices@co.cal.md.us](mailto:trservices@co.cal.md.us) or go online for updates at [www.co.cal.md.us](http://www.co.cal.md.us)  
Calvert Marine Museum: 410-326-2042 ext. 11 to speak to Kathleen  
Or contact Maryland Relay for the Hearing and Speech Impaired: 800-735-2258

**FREE!**