



**Parent/Professional
Advocacy League, Inc.**

The Inside Track

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Manager, Central Mass
Pamela Bows, Policy Coordinator*

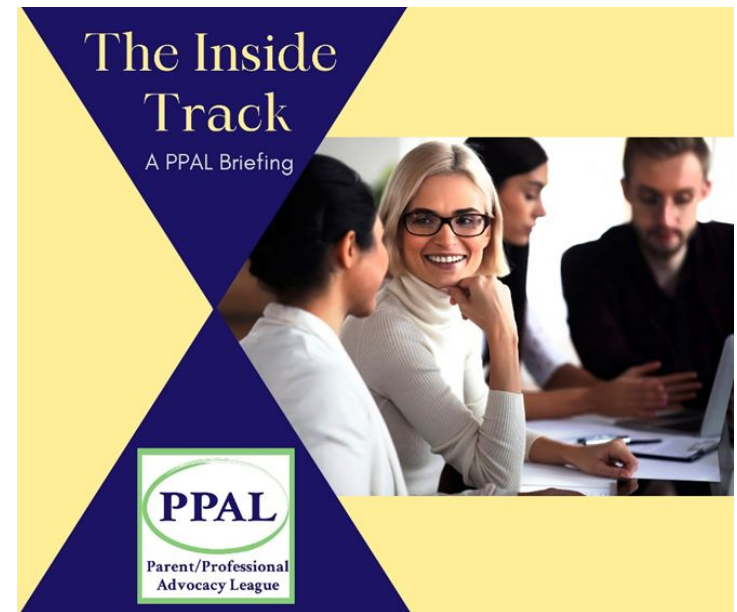


Parent/Professional Advocacy League Training
5/26/2026

Welcome to the Inside Track



- Confidentiality
- Bi-monthly meeting focused on policy, updates and networking
- Knowledge is power– and impact
- PPAL believes that families should have access to all information that affects them, and be able to provide feedback
- You will get a link to the slides and resources within the week that we only share with participants. You can see the meetings prior to check in on policy changes and/or things coming!



Funded by the Klarman Family Foundation

Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)



A statewide, grassroots, family- run organization in Massachusetts.

PPAL's goal is to promote opportunities for families to become leaders and to ensure that the perspective of families is present in all conversations about children and youth.

Family organizations are an important strategy for boosting family participation, supporting and sustaining family voice (Lazear & Anderson, 2009)



Housekeeping



- Please introduce yourself in the chat – name and role (parent, family support) and where you're from



- Please keep yourself on mute - unless you are speaking - to reduce background noise



- Use the 'raise hand' or chat to let us know when you'd like to speak



- Please type questions into the chat box

Agenda



- **PPAL Workshops + Events**
- ***DMH Budget Update from: the Children's Mental Health Campaign's Courtney Chelo***
- **Budget: DYS update**
- **Office of the Child Advocate - Welcome New Child Advocate Marisol Garcia**
- **MassHealth CBHI**
 - Your Feedback is Needed
- **PPAL's Priority Issues for the Upcoming Legislative Session (2027-2028)**
- **Networking + Resource Sharing**

Question Of The Month

PPAL'S **May** Question of the Month

Are you raising a child or supporting a young adult
with behavioral health needs?

Are you working closely with someone who is?

**Have you ever been reluctant to share the extent of
your child's behaviors for fear of what might happen?**



To Answer the Question, Please Visit
<https://ppal.net/question-of-the-month/>



QR Instructions:

1. Open the camera app on your cellphone
2. Position the QR code like you're going to photograph it.
3. Click the link that appears to go to the website

Question Of The Month

PPAL'S June Question of the Month

Are you raising a child or supporting a young adult
with behavioral health needs?

Are you working closely with someone who is?

What's your experience with **Mobile Crisis Intervention
(MCI) services?**



To Answer the Question, Please Visit
<https://ppal.net/question-of-the-month/>



QR Instructions:

1. Open the camera app on your cellphone
2. Position the QR code like you're going to photograph it.
3. Click the link that appears to go to the website

PPAL Parent Support Groups

JOIN US!!!!

Are you navigating the mental or behavioral health systems for a child, teen, or young adult?

Request 1:1 peer support!

We have NO waitlist!

MONDAY

Virtual: **Grupo de Apoyo Hispano**
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Hybrid: **Parenting Young Adults - Looking to the Future**
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM
(Gardner)

TUESDAY

Hybrid: **Caregiver Connections**
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM
(Winchendon)

FREE Services.
No insurance required.



WEDNESDAY

Virtual: **Relax & Connect**
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

In Person: **Caregiver Connections**
2nd Wednesdays
12:30 - 2:00 pm

4th Wednesdays
6:30 - 8:00 PM
(Westborough)

[Directions to PPAL office](#)

Virtual: **Parent Connections**
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

THURSDAY

Virtual: **Grandparents Lunch and Learn**
2nd Thursdays
12:00 - 2:00 PM

4th Thursdays
6:30 - 8:00 PM

Virtual: **Empowered Caregiver Connections**
6:00 - 7:30 PM

FRIDAY

Virtual: **Parenting Power UP**
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM



Do you need help navigating and advocating in the school system for a loved one with mental or behavioral health needs?

School Problem Solving Clinic

Make An Appointment!
PPALSchoolClinic@ppal.net

Upcoming PPAL Events:



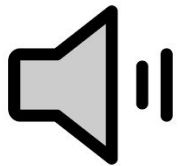
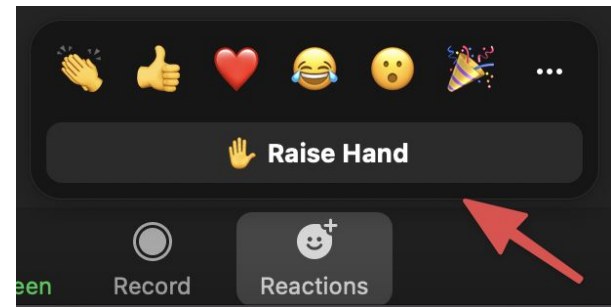
- **June 8:** Solace in Solidarity Day Retreat- for parents of youth that have systems involvement @ PPAL office in Westborough
- **June 9:** Statewide - Becoming a Supportive Adult: Affirming and Empowering LGBTQ+ Youth with Oscar Oliveira Soens, Safe Homes Program Director - Virtual
- **June 15:** Strategic Sharing - PPAL Office
- **June 16:** Mental Health IEP - Virtual
- **June 17:** Pre-Planning for a Mental Health Crisis: The Road to Readiness - Virtual

Discussion:

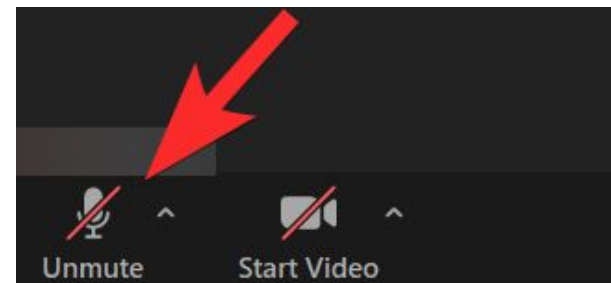
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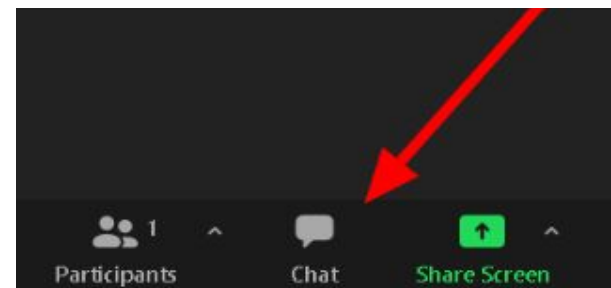
Use the Raise Hand feature



Unmute



Type questions into the chat box



Family Advocacy Alliance (FAA)

Meet FAA's Parent Leaders



Beth Murphy
FAA Parent Leader



Kevin Riley
FAA Parent Leader

Family Advocacy Alliance (FAA)

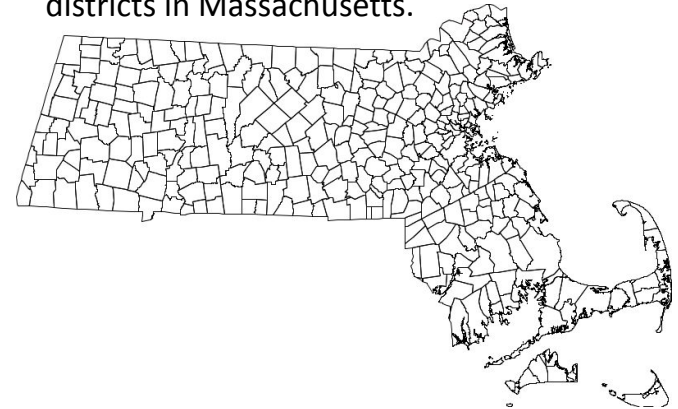


Our Goal

FAA's goal is to identify a caregiver/family in every legislative district in Massachusetts

Will you help us?

There are 40 Senate districts and 160 House of Representative districts in Massachusetts.

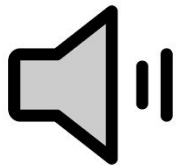
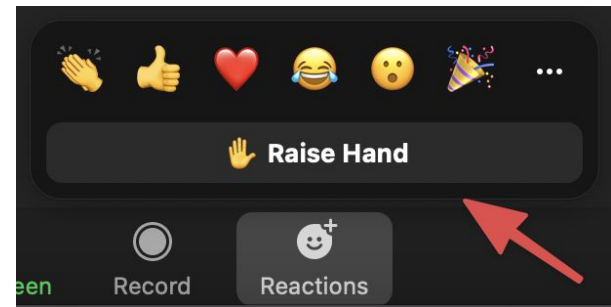


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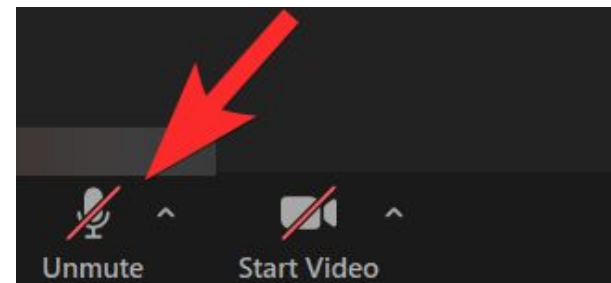
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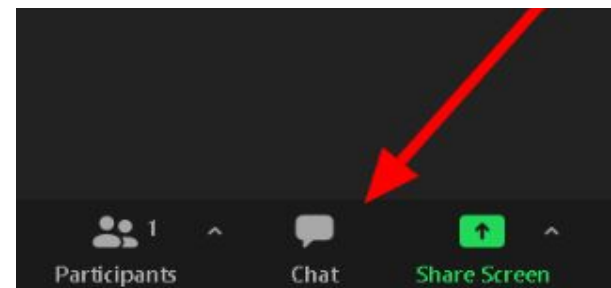
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State Budget Updates

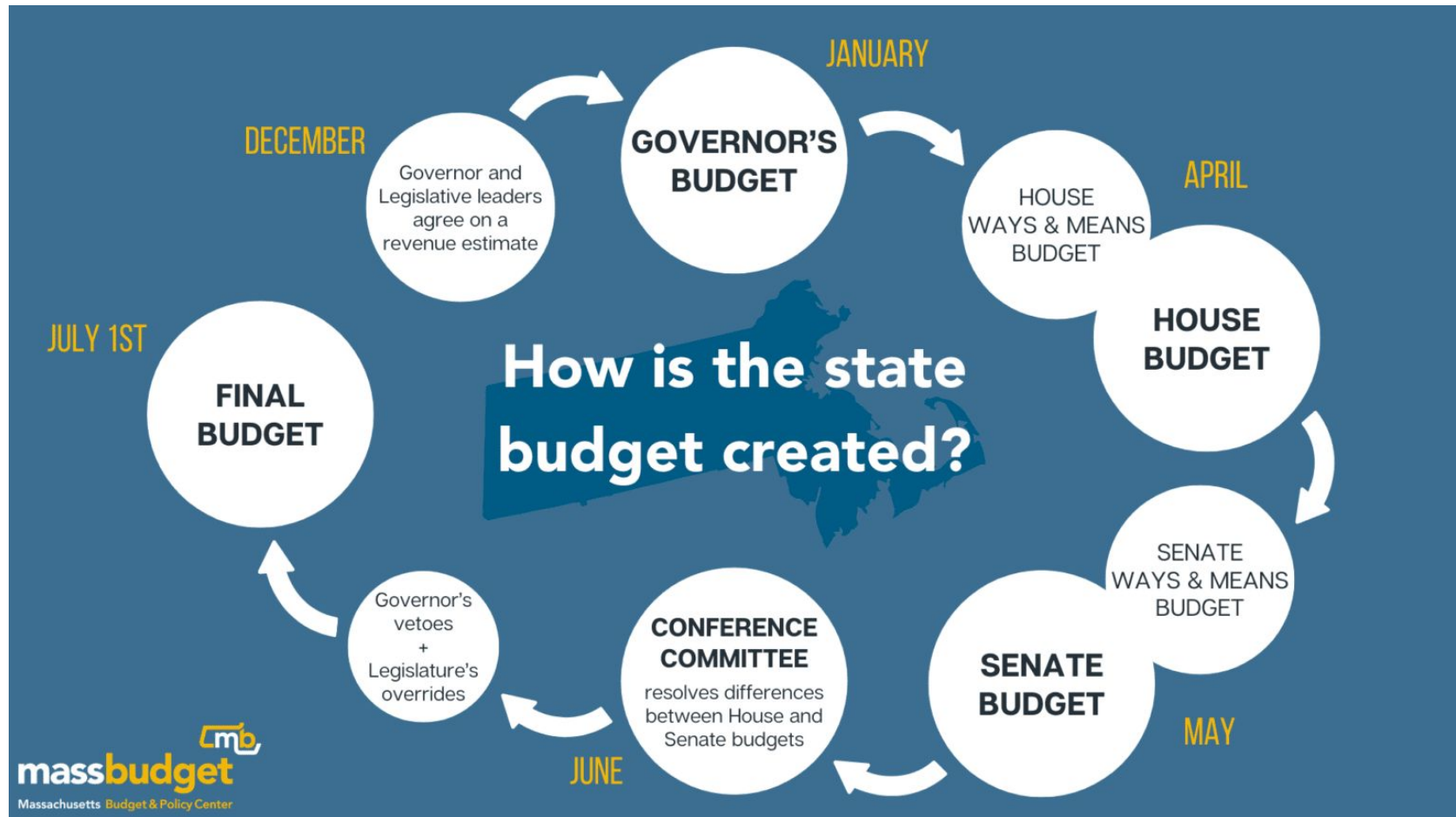
**with the Children's Mental Health Campaign's
Courtney Chelo**



Courtney Chelo
Director of Government Relations
MSPCC / CMHC

Massachusetts Budget Process Timeline

Overview



FY 27 State Budget

Department of Youth Services (DYS) Update

THANK YOU to the Senate for maintaining the Governor's proposed budget for DYS, especially the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (4200-0700)

Amendment 928 - Restoring Funding for Diversion Programming (Senator Crighton)

Why are the diversion programs needed?

- *this allows for law enforcement to divert charges for a youth
- *this will allow youth to get supports from Mental health Agencies rather than courts with no treatment
- *this allows for a full range of support and access the supports in the community and not have a record.

DYS can not do diversion without funding and often these children are not getting help they need when it is needed and continue to struggle.

[FY27 Senate Budget Advocacy: Take Action! - Children's League of Massachusetts](#)

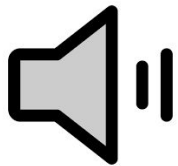
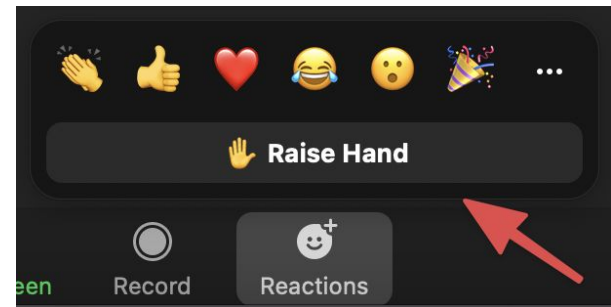
Do you have any budget updates to share?

Discussion:

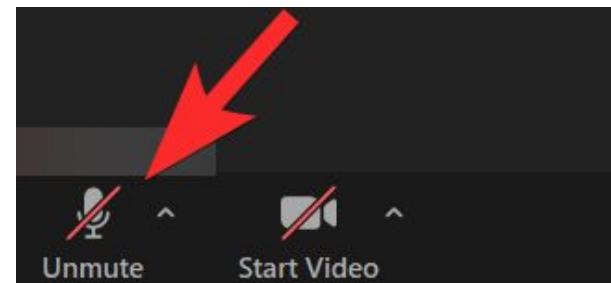
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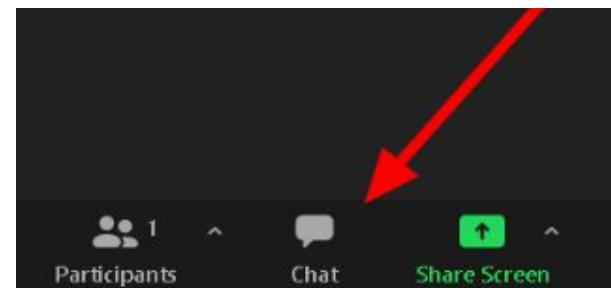
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Office of Child Advocate (OCA)

Marisol Garcia Named Next Child Advocate

Governor Maura Healey, Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, and Auditor Diana DiZoglio have announced Marisol Garcia as the next Child Advocate for Massachusetts. She will begin her five-year term on June 1, bringing extensive experience across child welfare, behavioral health, and juvenile justice systems.

PPAL is interested in how:

- family voice and care will be looked at
- how equity will be worked on
- how we will support families vs reporting on them especially when poverty is the concern not NEGLECT or Abuse on purpose
- how will all agencies be held accountable.

PPAL will be working on a listening session with Marisol in the next year with families and young people.

[Governor Healey, Attorney General Campbell and Auditor DiZoglio Announce Marisol Garcia as Next Child Advocate | Mass.gov](#)

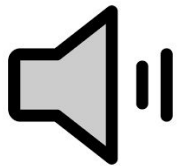
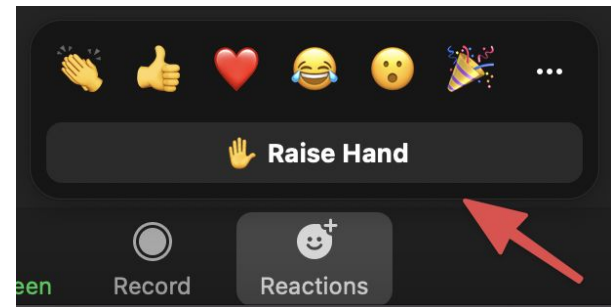


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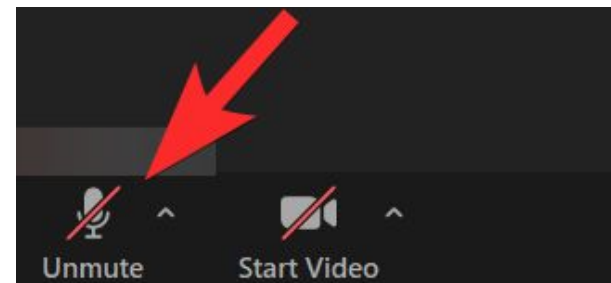
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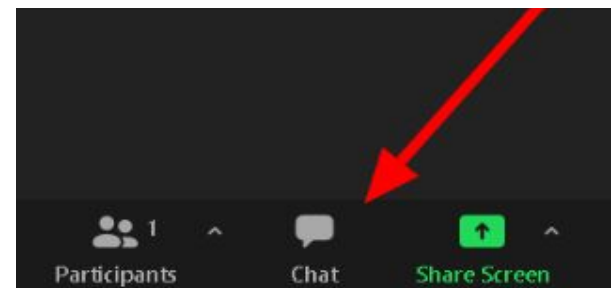
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MassHealth Updates

Behavioral Health Services for Children & Youth Brochure Available

MassHealth has released the updated Behavioral Health Services for Children & Youth Brochure (CBHI Brochure and Guides), now available for download and ordering [here](#).

The brochure is designed to help families and providers better understand and navigate behavioral health services available to children and youth through MassHealth. Organizations are encouraged to share this resource widely within their networks to support awareness of available services.

The brochure is available in the following languages:

- English
- Spanish
- Haitian Creole
- Portuguese
- Chinese
- Vietnamese

[MassHealth CBHI: Continuum of Outpatient Behavioral Health Services for Youth and Children](#)

MassHealth Updates

Referrals & Complaints

Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) Standard Referral Form:

[Click Here](#)

One referral form for all!

Complaints:

Your voice is needed to give feedback about what is working/not working with CBHI

Visit the Behavioral Health Feedback Portal to provide your feedback regularly.

<https://www.masshelpline.com/resources/>

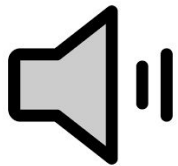
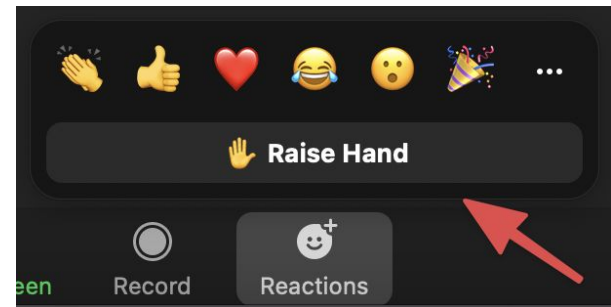
And send in a quick email to PPAL info@ppal.net

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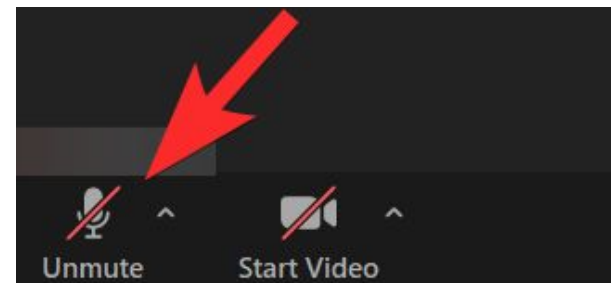
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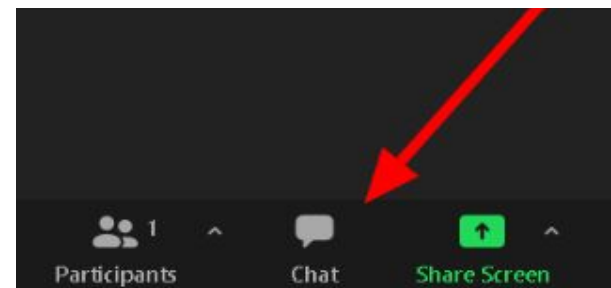
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2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:

Remove Bail from Children/Youth

- Remove BAIL from children/youth
- A child in DCF custody CANNOT be bailed out by DCF
- Some young people are held for \$1
- \$1.00 does not define a youth's worth!

<https://www.publiccounsel.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Courtroom-Practice-Guide-to-Bail.pdf>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:



PANS/PANDAS Screenings

Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS)

PANS is typically characterized by an acute onset of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and/or restricted food intake, along with at least two out of seven of the following neuropsychiatric symptoms: Anxiety, Depression, Emotional lability (rapid or dramatic changes in mood), Irritability, Aggression, and/or severe oppositional behaviors, Behavioral (developmental) regression, Sudden deterioration in school performance (often a decline in math and handwriting abilities), Motor or sensory abnormalities, Sleep disturbances, Enuresis, or urinary frequency

Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcus (PANDAS)

PANDAS is a subset of PANS. It is triggered by group A Strep (GAS) infections, which can occur in many parts of the body (e.g., sinuses and anus)—not just the throat. The onset of PANDAS symptoms can occur within days or months of contracting strep. Like PANS, PANDAS is a clinical diagnosis defined by the following criteria: Presence of significant obsessions, compulsions, and/or tics; Abrupt onset of symptoms or a relapsing-remitting course of symptom severity; Pre-pubertal onset; Association with streptococcal infection; Association with other neuropsychiatric symptoms, including: Anxiety, Restricted food intake, Emotional lability (rapid or dramatic changes in mood), Urinary frequency, Sleep disturbances

PANS/PANDAS bill to screen for all health concerns in PCP offices.

This tool would be a 10min screening to see if there are infections that are causing mental health conditions.

<https://www.lookfoundation.org/>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:

Mental Health Appointment Parity re: Schools

- Allow for mental health appointments during the school day to be looked at as medical need
- Fully excused without consequences.

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H557>

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S1421>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:

Raise the Age for youth in juvenile justice

Raise the age for youth in juvenile justice to be and include 18 - 22 yrs old.

- Young adults are highly amenable to rehabilitation.
- Keeping 18 – 20-year-olds in the juvenile system, where they must attend school and participate in rehabilitative programming will lower recidivism.
- Massachusetts policy makers raised the age of juvenile court to keep 17-year-olds out of the adult system in 2013. Since then, juvenile arrests have declined by 44%, and has seen faster declines in violent and property crime rates than the national average.
- Juvenile court case filings have declined by 24% during that period.

<https://www.raisetheagama.org/>

<https://www.cfij.org/rta-data>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58ea378e414fb5fae5ba06c7/t/5e164b9e0de87f32a24ad1f1/1578519455730/FACT+SHEET+RtA21+with+org+endorsers.pdf>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:



CRA Awareness and Advocacy

CRA Reform- changes to the Commonwealth's Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) system, with the goal of ensuring that youth and families who are in need of support are better able to access it without needing to go through a lengthy and potentially harmful court process.

- Court involvement is unnecessary in many cases
- Court involvement can be harmful to children and families
- There are significant disparities in which youth are subjects of a CRA petition - Black and Latino youth, LGBTQIA+ youth, youth with disabilities, and youth who are immigrants or whose parents are immigrants
- Barriers to accessing services outside the court process push families to the CRA
- system

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/an-act-regarding-families-and-children-in-need-of-assistance/download>

<https://www.publiccounsel.net/cafl/children-requiring-assistance-cra/>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/improving-massachusetts-child-requiring-assistance-system/download>

<https://healthlawadvocates.org/initiatives/mhapforkids/>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:

Changing the Definition of Neglect to Support Families

- Change the definition of neglect to support families
- Address poverty-related needs prior to filing a 51A on families

- Learnfare Requirement reform bill passed! - voted to repeal the school attendance requirement for welfare benefits

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/prevention/separating-poverty-neglect/?top=89>

<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/resources/newsletters/childrens-rights/addressing-underlying-issue-poverty-child-neglect-cases/>

<https://www.newbedfordguide.com/massachusetts-senate-votes-to-repeal-school-attendance-requirement-for-welfare-benefits/2026/05/22>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:

Mandated Supporter vs. Mandated Reporter

Looking at being a Mandated Supporter before a Mandated Reporter.

- Mandated reporters are professionals who are required to report suspected child abuse and maltreatment to Child Protective Services (CPS).
- Training for mandated reporters creates the false conception that reporting to CPS is the best way to ensure child safety and fails to explain the harms that families experience as a result of a CPS report.
- Research has shown that CPS investigations alone can do immediate and long-lasting psychological harm to children—and for many families, a report can result in permanent family separation.

A mandated supporting framework seeks to center families through equitable, harm reductionist, and anti-racist practices, while divesting from systems of surveillance and punishment.

<https://jmacforfamilies.org/mandated-supporting>

<https://www.aft.org/mandated-support-education>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:

Include Mental Health in Blue Envelope program + more

- The Blue Envelope initiative represents a collaborative effort aimed at fostering a safer and more understanding environment for drivers with autism spectrum disorder during traffic stops.
- Senate Amendment 2- would have added mental health needs to blue envelope program sponsored by McKenna - did not pass

<https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/mgh/pdf/children/lurie-center-lurienow-blue-envelope.pdf>

2027-2028 State Legislative Session Priorities:

Update 911 Disability Indicator Form to INCLUDE Mental Health

- Working with Law Enforcement on updated 911 disability form to include Mental Health.
- Some towns have included it on their individual forms, but not universal

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-a-disability-indicator-form-for-landline-wireless-and-voip-consumers>

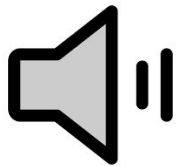
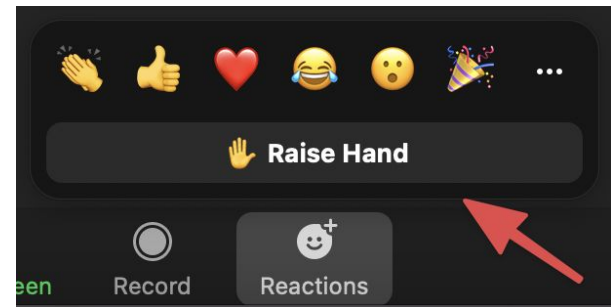
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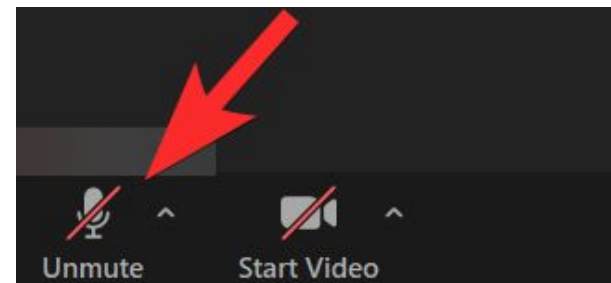
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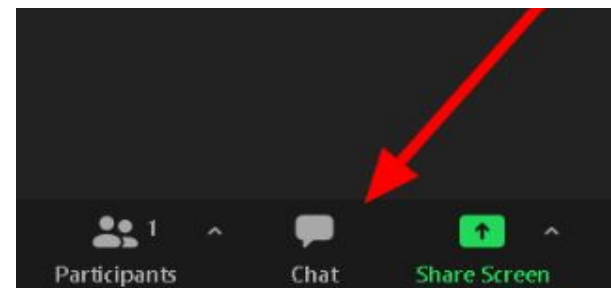
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Unmute



Type questions into the chat box



Networking—

Do you have

Resources

Job Opportunities

Recommendations

Requests

that you would like to share?

Please come off mute, or indicate in the chat that you would like to speak!



Thank You for attending PPAL's Inside Track!

You will receive the bulletins and resources discussed within the next few days.