

# FIRST STEPS TOGETHER



## FAMILIES IN RECOVERY SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

### COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

In so many ways, FIRST Steps Together is about connections. All of this important work is happening through both **inviting in** and **reaching out** to the community. This newsletter issue is themed *Community Connections*. We are highlighting the amazing work happening among our sites that is encouraging connections between parents, infants, children, grandparents, and other caregivers, as they connect with each other as well as to the greater recovery and family support networks within their communities. *Please note, we have shared some great flyers from sites and you can click on each image to view it full screen.*

### REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

FIRST Steps Together sites have been **reaching out** to other service providers and community service organizations as well as attending events in their area to share about what the program offers to families.



### INVITING THE COMMUNITY IN



**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER**  
FAMILIES IN RECOVERY SUPPORT



#### SOBER PARENTING GROUP

- Do you have children under 5 in your care or not? Are you pregnant?
- Are you in recovery or on a path to recovery?
- Are you looking for support with parenting?
- Would you like to meet other parents?

#### LEARN MORE AT OUR OPEN HOUSE!

- Monday, APRIL 29<sup>th</sup> 2019
- 6:00-7:00pm
- MOC, Inc. 49 Nursery Lane Suite 201 Fitchburg, MA
- Childcare & Snacks Provided!

Call Maria Rader with any questions at 978-785-5315 or email [mrader@mocinc.org](mailto:mrader@mocinc.org)



FIRST STEPS TOGETHER IS FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE ADMINISTRATION TO THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH. THE PROGRAM IS ADMINISTERED BY THE BUREAU OF FAMILY HEALTH & NUTRITION.



Montachusett Opportunity Council (MOC), Fitchburg and Center for Human Development (CHD), Pittsfield, have boosted their community connections by inviting members of their community in. MOC held an open house and Emily reported that **inviting in** care providers, families and other collateral partners was very well received and provided an opportunity to build relationships while introducing FIRST Steps Together staff and services to the attendees. CHD has a weekly coffee hour for parents and kids to come in and connect.



**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER**  
FAMILIES IN RECOVERY SUPPORT

**PEER COACHING & PARENTING SUPPORT**  
For Custodial and Non-Custodial Moms with current (or history of) opioid use

**JOIN US for weekly COFFEE HOUR**  
Where Moms with Children Under 5 can Play and Chat



Every Friday from 10:00am- 11:00am  
Center for Human Development  
141 North Street Suite 307

Questions? Call Jennifer (413) 372-9830



First steps together is funded by a grant from the substance abuse and mental health service administration to the Massachusetts department of public health. The program is administered by the bureau of family health and nutrition.

# SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

Our newsletter theme this month is **Community Connections** and we are pleased to be able to highlight the work that FIRST Steps Together team members are doing to initiate connections. Shalonda Nicholson-Mabry is a clinician with the FIRST Steps Together site at Square One in Springfield. She started doing outreach at age 13 as a student advocate in a youth program providing education for her peers on topics such as tobacco, safe sex and healthy relationships. Shalonda has been a Healthy Families home visitor, worked in Square One's Family Center and is a facilitator for Parents as Teachers. Being a community connector comes naturally to Shalonda as her grandparents modeled and encouraged being active in the community through founding their own social service organization and being foster parents.

Community events that Square One has participated in that Shalonda noted were particularly beneficial include the Springfield Community Baby Shower and the citywide Pancake Breakfast, both held in May. Each of these events featured local programs and services for families including WIC, DCF, breastfeeding support groups, Tapestry Health and Early Intervention. When asked why she felt doing these community events was effective, Shalonda shared

**"When I go to these community events, I stay updated. I learn about new services and what each program specializes in. I connect with the people who are working there—and there are always new people! The staff members I meet see who I am and that I am passionate about what I do for work. When they have a client that may be a good fit for any of our services, they remember me and are more likely to make the referral."**

Everyone on the FIRST Steps Together team is involved in outreach at Square One. Together, they decide who can attend based on schedules so that all staff have a role in going to these events or doing presentations at partner organization staff meetings.



*Shalonda Nicholson-Mabry and her beautiful sons. Shalonda is a clinician at Square One.*



For more information, visit us at [www.startsquareone.org](http://www.startsquareone.org) or call 413.732.5163.



Square One recognizes that families need and deserve support through the ups and downs of raising children. We also understand that families are the first teacher for children.

The Square One Family Centers, located in Springfield at our Main Street and King Street locations, are places where parents and children can meet other families, tap into community resources, learn new parenting skills, and participate in activities and support programs. Programs are open to all families with young children within the community and may include parent-child activities, playgroups, social events, and drop-in hours.

#### Our Family Center programs include:

##### Support Services

- Parent education classes and workshops
- Home visiting services
- Access to clothing, shoes and emergency food, diapers and feminine hygiene products
- Family lending library
- Assistance with SNAP eligibility
- Job search and resume support

##### Information and Community Resources

- Free information and referrals to community resources
- Free access to internet
- Information on child development

##### Family Play and Learn Groups

- Storytime/Literacy
- Arts & Crafts
- Themed play
- Special Events

*The Square One Family Center is a great community resource where community members can come and access clothing, emergency food, free internet, and support.*

In honor of Mother's Day this past May, Shalonda was honored by the Big Y Surprise Squad for the work that she does to support families in her community. Congratulations Shalonda! [Surprise Squad video](#)

## UPCOMING WEBINAR: TOBACCO CONVERSATIONS

We hope you are able to join the webinar with Janet Smeltz, the Director of the [TAPE Project of the Institute for Health and Recovery](#) on **August 12 from 1:30 to 2:30**. Join to learn tips for getting comfortable with talking about tobacco use with clients.

## UPCOMING TRAININGS AND EVENTS

August 8, Waltham, **Improving Follow-up for Families Impacted by Perinatal Opioid Use: A Joint Workshop of PNQIN, Early Intervention, and Early Head Start, PNQIN**

### **Group Peer Support (GPS)**

**Western MA (Pittsfield), [register here](#)**

September 11 - September 18 - October 2

**Metro Boston (Waltham), [register here](#)**

October 16 - October 22 - October 30

**Central MA (Shrewsbury), [register here](#)**

November 20 - December 4 - December 11

### **Reflective Supervision (for Supervisors)**

Please email [agirard@jfcsboston.org](mailto:agirard@jfcsboston.org) to register

**Western MA (Hadley), September 16**

**Eastern MA (Plymouth), October 7**

September 18-19, Marlborough, **Perinatal Mood Disorders: Components of Care, Postpartum Support International**

## TAKE IT TO BASECAMP!

**Basecamp** is the FIRST Steps Together project home base for cross site communication and resource sharing. Past newsletters, recorded webinars, message boards and more all in a centralized location.

[Take it to Basecamp!](#)



Caring for Generations  
**JF&CS**  
Jewish Family & Children's Service

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## OTHER RESOURCES ON SMOKING CESSATION



The [Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline](#) is a free and confidential service for Massachusetts residents who want help to end their tobacco use. If you are looking to quit tobacco, you can now get help from a quit coach over the phone; or use online tools and resources; or a combination of these online features and telephone coaching.

Callers to the Helpline receive specialized coaching over the phone to help them quit smoking or using other tobacco products. Callers can also receive advice on medications, in-person coaching, and how to find out if their insurance covers quit smoking services.

They also have a special program for pregnant and postpartum women including special targeted messages and financial incentives for participating.

Check out the [Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse](#) for health promotion materials such as signs, guides, fact sheets, and other materials. You can find resources on tobacco [here](#) including "12 Questions About Tobacco Use From People in Recovery from Substance Use Disorders"

Women face unique challenges when quitting smoking. [Smokefree Women](#) addresses these challenges by providing information and tools that specifically address women's experiences as they become smoke free, including free text messaging and a Facebook group.

