

**Summer  
2014**

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**Comments?  
Tips?  
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To send in comments, suggested topics for our next newsletter, or grandparent tips, please [email to us.](#)

Join Our Mailing List!

**Welcome to Our New GAN Members!**

*GAN members are a vital resource for autism  
... and each other!*

The **G**randparent **A**utism **N**etwork is an all-volunteer, international nonprofit organization that supports grandparents of children with autism and their families. GAN's mission is to promote awareness and understanding of autism and to enhance the resources essential to community responsiveness.

The Board of Directors is pleased to extend membership to grandparents internationally. The rate of autism is rapidly increasing *everywhere* and we support grandparents who want to make life better for their families and increase autism resources in their communities..

GAN's current focus is on the development of lifetime supports for people with autism. Our eNewsletters and websites address issues that universally impact grandparents. *All of GAN's programs and projects may be replicated, however, GAN's name and logo are trademarked and may not be used without permission.*

We know that the [best](#) recommendations come from our members and we welcome your feedback and suggestions about how we can increase support for you and your family.

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**Help to Prepare for School "IEP"**

Each public school student who receives special education and related services must have an **Individualized Education Program** (IEP). Every year, teachers, parents, school administrators and service providers meet together to determine what programs and services will be given to students. They collaborate in designing a plan that will meet each child's needs. This can be very stressful for parents but there are ways you may be able to help them through the process.

\* Offer to prepare a *Care Notebook* for your grandchild, prior to the IEP meeting, to enable easy access to the most recent school, medical and service provider reports that will be reviewed at the meeting. You can learn how to organize a *Care Notebook* [here](#). This will facilitate the process and will be greatly appreciated by all of the participants.

\* Ask if you can attend the IEP meeting as a "*silent advocate*" for your grandchild. Your presence will allow the parents to focus entirely on the discussion and may also help to lessen their stress. *It is very important to document everything stated during the session.* Your notes will be needed when the final educational program, services and supports are reviewed at the end of the meeting. If a service was offered but not included and documented in the final proposed educational plan, it cannot be added at a later time.

You will find additional information and tips regarding IEP meetings [here](#). [Wrightslaw.com](#) is an excellent resource for all issues related to special education law and the current issues that impact it.

## Skills You can Teach at Home

Grandparents are great resources for teaching living skills to grandchildren. Here are some basic hygiene, household, social and life skills you can help them to learn.

### Hygiene and Personal Grooming

- \* Brush teeth at least twice daily
- \* Floss on a regular basis
- \* Wash face frequently
- \* Shower or bathe daily with soap and shampoo
- \* Clean and trim nails
- \* Comb hair and recognize when haircuts are needed
- \* Use deodorant
- \* Toileting: lowering seat, using seat covers, washing hands

### Household Chores

- \* Make bed daily
- \* Help to change and launder linens
- \* Take out trash and replace trash can liners
- \* Recycle cans, plastic and paper in appropriate containers
- \* Clean countertops, sinks, tubs, toilets
- \* Vacuum, sweep and mop floors

### Social Skills

- \* Use lists or pictures to illustrate the order of events
- \* Role play introductions and turn taking at home
- \* Practice how and when to enter conversations with others
- \* Reinforce that "no" means "no"
- \* Accept changes in plans when alternatives are needed

#### Communicating by Phone and Email

- \* Practice how to leave voicemail messages
- \* Write, dictate and send emails

Here are additional skills you can teach to more advanced grandchildren:

#### Public Transportation

- \* Learn how to get pass, pay fare, get transfers
- \* Locate stops, schedules, route info to destinations
- \* Ride together to places of interest
- \* Learn how to access a shuttle or get a cab

#### Finances

- \* Pay bills by mail, online or in person
- \* Logs deposits in checking and savings accounts
- \* Records checks in check log
- \* Where to access account balance
- \* Learn social security number and when to use it
- \* Distinguish between credit and debit cards

## **GAN's Recent Activity**

### **SOCIALS for Adults & Caregivers**

The programs and projects GAN develops in Orange County, California can be replicated in communities everywhere. Most school autism programs and services end when students reach the age of 22. *It is very important to help teens and young adults develop friendships and social connections in the community before that support stops.*

GAN has sponsored ***Socials for Adults with Autism (age 16 and up) and their Caregivers*** during the past year. Grad students from 3 local universities volunteered to host adult guests with autism and GAN volunteers greeted everyone and introduced caregivers. A 10 piece band, catered refreshments and activities made these cost-free events very popular with the guests and the volunteers.

In order to accommodate more guests, **California State University - Fullerton (Center for Autism), Chapman University and the University of California - Irvine** have agreed to host a social on each campus. Student volunteers from all 3 universities will participate at each event and GAN will assist in administrative and hosting tasks. Everyone benefits from the socials: the adults and caregivers who feel socially isolated have new opportunities to meet others with similar

interests. Student volunteers engage with the people they are training to serve and receive community service credit for their assistance. The universities increase awareness about their autism training programs and expand their community outreach. This new alliance has already promoted academic camaraderie and has opened new opportunities for collaborative autism research. Because the program utilizes existing resources and volunteers, the socials will continue to be cost-free for guests.

***You can provide social opportunities like this in your community, as well. Consider sponsoring a picnic in a local park or hosting an event in a community clubhouse. You can ask philanthropic organizations and clubs to sponsor an event or to provide volunteer support. Please contact GAN for additional ideas about how you can increase cost-free social opportunities for families. We will be pleased to help you get started!***

The board of directors of the **Grandparent Autism Network** and I welcome your suggestions and requests for newsletter topics. We invite you to share this newsletter with your family and friends.

Thank you for making GAN members  
***... a vital resource for autism ... and each other!***

Warm regards,

Bonnie Gillman  
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