

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 160
August 2023

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What's In This Issue?

The dog days of summer have arrived, and we're beginning to see the early signs of the transition back to school (has anyone been to Wal-Mart lately?).

But let's not get ahead of ourselves! We still have a whole month of summer left, so let's embrace our last few weeks of this beautiful season in KW. And there are so many great activities, events, and other things to get involved in.

Check out this latest issue of Family Pulse for a full line up of inclusive activities for you and your family this August. Wishing you a delightful month ahead!



Support WRFN

Waterloo Region Family Network
www.wrfn.info
info@wrfn.info
519.886.9150

Journey to Belonging Update

Visit <https://wrfn.info/CommunityNewsAndUpdates/updates-on-developmental-services-reform.htm> to see the latest update from Journey to Belonging in both French and English.

Bill C-22 Update

Bill C-22, from Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion Carla Qualtrough, proposes to create a federal income supplement for low-income, working-age people with disabilities, modelled after the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

In a historic moment on June 20, Bill C-22 was passed in Senate and is now onto the final step to becoming ratified! It received Royal Assent June 22 and will come into force no later than one year after this date.

This will help ensure the government establishes the necessary regulatory framework to administer the benefit and that eligible recipients receive the benefits as soon as possible.

Bill C-22 is a crucial law to give people with disabilities greater financial security, more choice, freedom, and dignity to live inclusive lives in the community. This bill has been made possible because of the mobilization and advocacy from multiple disability organizations, individuals, and dedicated MPs. Thank you to all those who made this possible!

Family Schedules - Upheaval and Regrouping

Cristina Stanger, Self-Advocacy Liaison

Schedules, or lack thereof, are tricky. Every family's summer is going to look different — some will choose camps, some won't; some will opt to travel, some won't; some will involve time-off, some won't. But regardless of what your summer looks like, there's a good chance that you or your family members' summer months will be somewhat disrupted compared to the spring or fall.

Scheduling is a topic I've been thinking a lot about. I'm trying to build my capacity and knowledge base for scheduling, given this falls into the executive function skill set, which is an area I need to invest extra energy and effort in order to experience success. I write this article as much for my own learning, as I do for you.

I began by reflecting on last summer, how I had alternated weeks at camp with weeks at home for my oldest child; this did not work well for our household. Too much flip-flopping. This year I gave each month a focus — I kept things relaxed for July, and clustered camp weeks together in August, which has worked much better. That said, I still seem to have overbooked my kiddos.

I failed to predict that the winding down of the pandemic has allowed many non-camp opportunities, like engaging with friends and neighbours, to resurface. So, I have to remind myself that I will never have summer planning all figured out, and as my children grow and develop, I am chasing a moving target. However, I felt there must be some strategies to help, so I began to look for ways to make our family's summer schedule more tangible, and in doing so, I also hoped to find tools and approaches that can be carried forward as we navigate a new fall schedule as well.

My main tool isn't going to shock you: a calendar. Boring, right? Perhaps, but it is mindblowing to me how much it has helped, particularly for our five year old. We found we needed a weekly calendar for day-to-day representation, as well as an overarching two-month summer calendar to show the focus of each week (both of these in addition to the virtual calendar my partner and I share). We incorporated pictures whenever possible and have the calendars displayed in a place that is accessible to my children. This way they can see what's coming, which reduces their anxiety, and I don't have to hold all the information in my head or constantly consult my phone. The weekly calendar has become a nice opportunity for family collaboration and creativity (how should we draw occupational therapy?) as we put sticky notes to represent various activities and commitments of the upcoming week. With the sticky notes we can revisit, discuss, and rearrange if needed.

Here are other tips and ideas I collected:

- Physical activity — Incorporating physical fitness each day can aid in keeping regular bedtimes. If my kids complain about required outdoor time, I've started telling them that this is our summer version of 'recess'.
- Brainstorm with family members about different goals they wish to work toward or skills they might like to build. For example, cursive writing, a sewing project, increased involvement in pet care, making it all the way across the monkey bars, etc.

- Account for some flexibility — you can make a schedule, but I like to think of ours as schedule-ish, with room for modification (our sticky notes work well in this regard). Or you can schedule categories of time, but have different options within them. For example, outdoor time could be bikes, playground, and skipping.
- Build in some constants or sameness — This one has really been good for me, personally. Everything doesn't have to be novel. It can be nice to revisit a location regularly, comforting even, as everyone knows what to expect and what to pack, and so on. So consider designating a day to go to the library or public pool each week.
- Set limits and communicate them where appropriate — For example, these might relate to screen time, access to technology, or how much to shift bedtime and wake up time. Grown-ups should probably adhere to these as well.
- Remember to block off downtime — I have to stop and remind myself to enjoy summer's lessened commitments and fewer extracurriculars. This can serve as a nice opportunity to practise managing unstructured time; if this feels daunting, you can create a list of suggestions should someone need ideas on how to fill time.
- Schedule in the 'un-fun' tasks as well, otherwise, in my house, they will never get done. For example, going through last year's school work, vacuuming all the sand out of the car, and more.
- There are [so many other fun scheduling ideas](#) to help more independent children fill their time, such as a theme for each day of the week, or a list of must dos, and optional items for each day.


At the end of the summer, assuming I can remember, I hope to reflect on how things went. I plan to ask family members what they liked most, or if there is anything they would not want to do again, while it's still fresh in their minds (I have made incorrect assumptions in the past). I've already learned that I need to remember my kids will be a bit older, with more capacity and shifting interests, as I think toward planning the next summer.

Some of the concepts mentioned above can be carried over to the fall. For example, scheduling downtime; I like to keep weekends in September commitment free, as we are busy adjusting to new weekday routines. As a family we can revisit concepts around things we want to learn, and what activities feel most important to us, as we decide how many extracurriculars we can handle as a family. And I have to remind myself to factor in other therapies into the fray of business as well. We will continue to use our weekly calendar going forward.

This scheduling stuff certainly isn't easy. But I am discovering how a bit of forethought can help reduce my own overwhelm and help me make more intentional choices about how we spend our time. We are all learning as we go, and I wish you the best of luck as you and your family find your way through the summer and into the fall.

What's Happening at WRFN

WRFN programs and services are transitioning into being available in person. Supports are also available through phone and email connections and through other virtual formats. Please reach out and let us know how we can help you and your family.



A NEW CHAPTER

This group is for family members & caregivers interested in preparing for the future of their youth/adult family member with a lifelong disability.

We have a new feature to our meetings called "Ask Us Anything" from 9-9:30pm. This is a chance for those who attend the meeting to ask questions or clarify points when the main part of the meeting is over.

Join our Facebook group called A New Chapter – parent and caregiver connections.


August 1, 2023
Ask and Share about Community Activities and Resources

Come and share what activities and resources have worked for your loved one and learn about new possibilities for the future.

There will be something for everyone!

All meetings are virtual Zoom meetings from 7:30pm-9:00pm

If you would like to receive emails about our monthly meetings (always the first Tuesday of the month), please email Mary at maryjpike@hotmail.com and ask to be put on our email list.



We hope you can join the next A New Chapter Zoom meeting on Tuesday, August 1 at 7:30 pm. We are calling it *Ask and Share about Community Activities and Resources*. Come and share what activities and resources have worked for your loved one and learn about new possibilities for the future - maybe even for this fall! Is your loved one looking for more social connection, or for things to do on their own? Do they want more structured time, or less structured activities? There will be something for everyone. We look forward to seeing you there.

Just a reminder that you'll need to RSVP to Mary Pike at maryjpike@hotmail.com to receive the Zoom link for the evening.



THEMUSEUM is pleased to offer WRFN Families 25% off the admission price—which includes access to the new EYEPOOL Gallery immersive experience.

The discount code for Waterloo Region Family Network is EPWRFN25

When pre-purchasing tickets on THEMUSEUM website there is a “Apply Discount Code” button in the checkout, or in-person visitors can provide the code to our Guest Services desk to receive this discount.

Some Key Accessibility points about THEMUSEUM:

- Parking is available in the City of Kitchener garage on Duke street, which has a direct connection to THEMUSEUM building on the second level. There is also a loading/unloading area directly in front of the building on King Street (no parking there, although there is surface-level parking along King Street and another city lot around the corner on Queen St).
- There is elevator access to all five floors, and the accessible washrooms are located in the elevator lobby area on every floor.
- The Eyepool installation has flashing/moving lights that could trigger photosensitive seizures.
- There’s more information about the current exhibit here:
<https://themuseum.ca/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/eyepool-presents-impossible-geometries> and a short clip of the installation in action here:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CpdP8Lgg2fj/>

What's Happening at WRFN

Ask A Self-Advocate

Do you need to look at a challenge you are facing with a new perspective? Would you like to bounce ideas off someone who's been there? Cristina was diagnosed with exceptionalities as an adult, and is passionate about sharing her lived experience. Speak with Cristina to discuss your own questions and concerns to gain new insights and ideas. This program is open to individuals with disabilities, families, or service providers.

For more information on Ask A Self-Advocate please contact Cristina Stanger at Cristina.Stanger@wrfn.info or call 226-753-9090.

Parent Mentor Program

Through our Parent Mentor Program, we provide a means for parents to connect with each other, as well as guide, support and help empower each other to work through the highs and lows that make up their journeys. Our Parent Mentors provide information and emotional support; share ideas and strategies; and connect their mentees with community resources.

Learn more about our Parent Mentor Program [here](#).

School-Issue Parent Support Group

This peer-led group provides support, advice and a safe environment for parents who have questions or concerns about school issues affecting their children with special needs. The WRFN School Issues Support Group meets on the last Wednesday of each month during the school year. We will be taking a break over the summer. Our regularly scheduled meetings will return in the fall.

For more information, please contact Sue Simpson at Sue.simpson@wrfn.info.

Family Resource Coach

Our Family Resource Coaches are available to meet in person, by phone, email, or virtual call to lend a helping hand and personal guidance to families and to connect you to updated information, resources, and opportunities available in our community.

Call Erin Sutherland at 226-808-5460 or email Erin.Sutherland@wrfn.info.

Call Leah Bowman at 226-898-9301 or email Leah.Bowman@wrfn.info.

Call Marla Pender at 226-338-7274 or email Marla.Pender@wrfn.info.

Coffee Club

Greetings from Coffee Club! We currently meet on Zoom, usually on Thursdays from 3 - 4 pm. Generally, we are just catching up and chatting, mixed with a little bit of watching YouTube.

If you would like to join us, please send me an email at Carmen.sutherland@wrfn.info. I will make sure to keep you on the email list so that you receive a Zoom invite and I will also keep you aware if we ever change or add a meeting date.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Here at WRFN, we are community oriented and committed to connecting families to local events and learning opportunities.

The information provided in this newsletter is not a recommendation, referral or endorsement of any resource, therapeutic method, or service provider. You are urged to use independent judgement when considering any resource.

Programs & Recreation

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre is offering “Young Parents Connect,” a free family program for pregnant and parenting youth, Tuesdays from 1-3 pm. Call the centre for the next session start date. Each week the group cooks a meal to enjoy together and discuss a parenting topic/resource/service that is of interest to the group. At the end of each session, join EarlyON staff for a fun interactive circle time with the children. Cambridge Family Early Years Centre, Unit 105, 73 Water Street North, Cambridge, Ontario.

Shore Centre – Pride and Joy

SHORE Centre is excited to share their newest program “Pride and Joy”—a free prenatal education series for 2SLGBTQIA+ families. Topics include: pregnancy and prenatal planning, labour and birth, comfort measures, postpartum care and planning, newborn care, birthing locally as a 2SLGBTQIA+ family. Pre-registration is required. For more information, call 519-743-9360.

Hope for Families Counselling Centre

Hope for Families Counselling Centre is hosting a monthly social gathering for families with Trans and gender diverse children and teens. Contact holly@hopeforfamilies.net for more information.

Fun Fearless Females

Get all your summer activities lined up with Fun Fearless Females! In July and August, the crew will be heading to the beach, the market and the outlet mall, having a picnic by Lake Ontario, creating a garden oasis (in a jar) and even visiting Niagara Falls! Check out the calendar at:

<https://www.funfearlessfemales.ca/events>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings

Whether it's children and youth groups, employment workshops, tech sessions or book clubs, CNIB's innovative programs are designed to educate, entertain and engage! CNIB's free programs are available to Canadians who are blind or partially sighted as well as their families, friends and caregivers.

Visit their website to learn more: <https://bit.ly/38cRE1o>

Cambridge Food Bank

Cook, stuff, plant, bake and play at the Cambridge Food Bank! To learn more about and register for programs offered at Cambridge Food Bank, please contact Vanessa Tonic: vtonic@cambridgefoodbank.org 519-622-6550 x109.

Sunbeam

Sunbeam's new Recreation & Wellness Program enhances the quality of life of program participants. With a focus on recreation, socialization, inclusion, and community, including both physical and emotional wellness, the Recreation & Wellness team provides fun and engaging programming at various community locations.

- The Recreation & Wellness program is offered as a fee-for-service option to individuals living with a developmental disability.
- Program participation is an eligible activity for the use of Passport Funds, which are intended to address the community participation services and support needs of individuals.
- For all activities and events, participants must be accompanied by their own support person or a family member.

For more information about this program, its calendar of upcoming events, and how to register please click to visit: www.sunbeamcommunity.ca/recreation-wellness-program.

KW Habilitation and LEGUp!

Youth Exploring Possibilities (YEP): There are still spots available in YEP for the next three weeks. YEP is offered in July and August and focuses on the exploration of community resources, recreational activities, opportunities to participate in Work Readiness exercises.

The **LEGUp! Fall schedule is now available!** Registration opens August 11.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

OK2BEME

OK2BEME– Families in TRANSition (FIT) is a program for trans, non-binary, and gender-questioning kids and youth ages 5-18 and their parents/caregivers. FIT is open to all adults who play a primary caregiving* role for a trans/non-binary/gender-questioning person aged 5-18. There are separate groups (by age) for the kids and youth that run at the same time in different rooms. If the young person doesn't want to attend or isn't able, the parents/caregivers can still attend the parent/caregiver group. Please visit the [webpage](#) for more info about the FIT program.

*biological, adoptive, kinship, foster, legal guardians, informal caregiving and extended family

Siblings Canada: Savvy Siblings

Siblings Canada, in partnership with PLAN, is delighted to introduce [Savvy Siblings: Strengthening the Financial Security of Your Sibling with a Disability](#). Funded by the Government of Canada, this free online course is for adults who want to play a role in improving the financial security of their siblings with disabilities—whether today or in the future. [Register for Savvy Siblings today!](#)

LCOworks

LCOworks is a free online program that supports positive employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities, a traditionally underrepresented and at-risk population in the labour market. Any Ontario resident with a developmental disability is eligible to participate in LCOworks. Email to apply or learn more at support@lifecourseonline.com.

SPECTRUM Youth Under the Rainbow

Join SPECTRUM across the Region as they read stories, explore art and have fun together in a safe and supported environment for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, families and allies. Visit <https://wrfn.info/CommunityNewsAndUpdates/Family-and-Youth-Under-the-Rainbow.htm> to see a full list of upcoming events and where to register.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Bridges to Belonging

BE-Friends: BE-Friends is a volunteer matching program that connects people with any disability 17 years or older (Friend) with a community volunteer "Buddy" (19 years or older). The pair get together as often as they want, enjoy fun activities they choose and become part of each other's world. BE-Friends is a bridge to meaningful reciprocal relationships and lifelong friendships.

People are being matched and friendships are blooming. We invite you to become part of this friendship adventure!

If you are 17 years old or older, living with a disability, and want someone to spend time and build a lasting friendship with, we invite you to [Click Here](#) and fill out an application to be matched with a Buddy Community Volunteer.

If you are 19 years old or older and want to create an authentic friendship as a Volunteer Buddy to a person with a disability and be part of their journey to living their best life, we invite you to [Click Here](#).

We are also matching seniors together for fun and connection. If you are 65+ and are interested in making a new friend to connect with in community, [please apply here](#).

City of Kitchener

Are you an older adult looking to learn about tech? Join one of the [Kitchener Tech Connect](#) courses. Programs are being offered in person at the Downtown, Kingsdale, Chandler Mowat & Doon Pioneer Park Community Centres. These free tech courses are for older adults in our community looking to improve social connections, access to information and digital literacy. [Click here](#) to see upcoming courses and to register!

Keep Your Head Up Foundation

Join Keep Your Head Up Foundation for its new Waterloo Region Youth Mindfulness and Movement program for all ages of individuals living with the effects of traumatic brain injury (there's also a national program available, too). These are free virtual classes to do activities like gentle yoga, meditation, beading, painting and more. Registration is now open! Visit www.KeepYourHeadUp.ca/mindful-moments.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

YWCA Canada – The Next Accelerator

Are you a parent or caregiver planning for your child's post-secondary education? Connect with The Next Accelerator to learn more about the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) and how you can apply for free funding for your child's education. A child is eligible for up to \$2000 if they: are from a moderate or fixed income family, are born on or after January 1, 2004, and are a resident of Canada. Learn more at ywcacambridge.ca/financial or email s.hohenadel@ywcacambridge.ca.

ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections

Friendly Connections is focused on helping its community and individuals of all ages with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, overcome isolation. It aims to help improve the well-being of individuals through socializing and providing entertaining resources. Friendly Connections wants to connect with individuals across Canada through phone calls, video calls, emailing, messenger chats and good old fashion mail. They mail letters, postcards, colouring sheets, activity sheets, stickers and other fun goodies!

<https://connectability.ca/friendly-connections/>

Community of Hearts Summer Break

Community of Hearts is offering a summer break program for high school students, Mondays through Fridays from 9 am to 3 pm. The program is \$60 a day, but free trial days are offered to try out the program! It's also Passport Fund friendly. Youth will take part in health and wellness activities, person-centred learning, community engagement, employment readiness, life skills, arts, and gardening at Summer Break at Community of Hearts. Contact info@communityofhearts.ca to book a tour or free trial.

City of Cambridge

The City of Cambridge has two new yoga programs for youth: Adaptive Yoga for teens with disabilities (13-21 years) on Wednesdays 6 – 6:50 pm and Girls Only Yoga (10-14 years) on Wednesdays 7-7:50 pm. For the Adaptive Yoga classes, participants can bring a program assistant when using a PAL card and there will also be a Leisure Buddy to support the class. For more info, connect with Jenn at blanchardj@cambridge.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Recreational Respite

Virtual group programs have been developed in partnership with participants to address a variety of interests, skill practice, goals and outcomes that promote inclusion, encourage community participation and nurture social connectivity. Visit the website for the August virtual group program calendar for Children and Youth and Young Adults! <https://www.recrespite.com/virtual-services/>

Sensory Workout

Sensory workout is a program that combines what we know about exercise and sensory processing to make physical activity more accessible and enjoyable for all! The Sensory Workout trainings and demo videos are created by Aptus' Clinical Services team, with generous funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

[Check out Sensory Workout on YouTube!](#)

March of Dimes Connect & Share

Wouldn't it be wonderful to visit with someone regularly who shares your interests?

March of Dimes virtual Connect & Share program was designed to make that happen. You will be matched with a volunteer who shares your interests and your buddy will visit with you (as often as you like) – just for the fun of it.

You can have phone visits or you can have a video call using a platform like Zoom.

<https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/programs/rec/connect>

Oak Bridge Academy - Acknowledging the Sibling Experience

[Acknowledging the Sibling Experience](#) (ASE - pronounced ACE) is a well-being curriculum for siblings of neurodiverse individuals-that is divided into two subgroups (grades 5-8 and grades 9-12). The ASE curriculum incorporates psychoeducational and psychotherapeutic tools that are strategically implemented across the 7-week program. If you are interested in being contacted when ASE opportunities resume (hoping to resume as of October 2023), please visit <https://ow.ly/Oe0150Ppj84>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops, Training & Events

Woolwich Counselling

Woolwich Counselling Centre has many great small group therapy sessions and workshops for children, youth, adults, and seniors. See the link below to learn what's new this month! To register, please call 519-669-8651 or email info@woolwichcounselling.org.

<https://woolwichcounselling.org/upcoming-events/>

DSO Housing Toolkit Lunch and Learn

Join DSO Housing Navigators on August 28 over lunch to discuss housing topics. Sessions take place in a virtual format and are open to people with a developmental disability, their family members and/or support networks, as well as professionals in Ontario.

<https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07ejvvlb2v7a9dfbf1&oseq=&c=&ch=>

DSO Technology to Support Independence

Join DSO Housing Navigators on September 14 at 2 pm for a virtual presentation on various types of technological assistance available today and how it might be used to support independence. While technology can never replace human connection, it can certainly help to increase independence thus decreasing the need (and expense) for human “just-in-case” supports.

<https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07ejwniw7b392c6533&oseq=&c=&ch=>

CADDAC Conference

CADDAC's ADHD Conference, on October 28 and 29, provides information for adults with ADHD, parents and/or caregivers of children with ADHD and their families, as well as educators and allied health professionals.

Venue: Foothills Academy, 745 37 Street NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 4T1, Canada

<https://caddac.ca/programs-events/caddac-2023-annual-adhd-conference/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Optimizing Primary Care for Refugee Newcomers Conference

On Friday, September 22 from 7:30 am – 5 pm, The Refugee Primer will provide clinicians with practical skills to address the unique needs of newly arrived refugees to Canada. This one-day conference at Women's College Hospital in Toronto will allow clinicians to identify common and serious health challenges that confront their refugee patients and describe an approach to management of these conditions. It will also help clinicians identify resources to address the existing resource gaps that arise in the care of refugee populations. The Primer will provide opportunities for health care providers to participate in and join existing networks of refugee-serving clinicians.

Register [Here](#)

Partners for Planning

P4P will be offering a fall 2023 session of Developing Your Individualized Housing Action Plan, a 10-week virtual program, beginning on Monday, September 25 at 6:30 -8:30 pm. The workshop will run each Monday evening for two hours, for 10 weeks. The cost for the workshop is \$1,600 and is considered a Passport-reimbursement expense. If you would like to secure a spot in the fall session, complete the form linked below and send a deposit of \$250.00 to secure your spot.

[Housing Workshop Form Link](#)

If you would like to learn more about the workshop we will also be hosting a series of information sessions on:

[Tuesday, August 15, 2023 at 6:30 pm - REGISTER HERE](#)

[Tuesday, August 29, 2023 at 6:30 pm - REGISTER HERE](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Resources

Aide Canada

Many of Aide Canada's resources relate to autism, but there are also plenty that apply to all disabilities. There is a parent series of "Ask a Question" where families & self-advocates can respond with their experience. There is also a resource page where you can borrow books and items and is available Canada wide. Check it out at www.aidecanada.ca.

Breastfeeding Dashboard

Canada's "[Breastfeeding Dashboard](#)" is now available on PHAC's Public Health Infobase platform. Along with this data tool, the first edition of Canada's Breastfeeding Progress Report is available. The data provides an overview of breastfeeding rates in Canada, including information on breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity, examined by various geographic and sociodemographic factors. Reasons for not breastfeeding and reasons for stopping breastfeeding before six months are also presented, as are rates of vitamin D supplementation of breastfed infants. Questions related to the new materials can be directed to: dca_public_inquiries@phac-aspc.gc.ca

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

CCRW Employment Services help job seekers with disabilities get connected with local businesses. They provide industry-specific training, workplace accommodation and adjustment planning, employer matching, and access to a hidden job market.

For more information or to register, call: Jennie Di Girolamo – Employment Facilitator (519) 571 6788 ext. 7661 or email jdigirolamo@ccrw.org

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

March of Dimes Hi, Tech!

If you have a disability and are 18 years or older, you are eligible to be matched with a tech support coach. Your coach will answer your technology questions and help get you set up. To learn more visit <https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/programs/atech/hitech>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Plexus

Plexus is a new network of FASD support and services in Waterloo Region. The services of the Plexus team are available to children, youth, and families living with (potential) FASD up until the age of 18 or 21 and still attending school. You must reside in the Waterloo Region. A referral can be made by the individual or their legal guardian. Plexus will also accept referrals from extended family members, family physician, or any agency acting on the individual's/family's behalf if permission to do so has been provided by the individual or their guardian. Referrals can be made here: [Plexus Referral](#)

National Advisory Council on Poverty

National Advisory Council on Poverty's 2022 report on the progress of Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy. The council interviewed 1000 people across the country about the underlying and overlapping causes and impacts of poverty and hosted eight small-group sessions where people with lived expertise of poverty could share their personal stories. Those conversations and the insights that the participants shared are the foundation of this report.

<https://bit.ly/3D15p2m>

Positive Behaviour Supports Corporation (PBS Corp.)

PBS provides high quality Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy to children and adults diagnosed with Autism or other qualifying diagnoses. Services are provided in the home, school, and community settings. ABA is implemented in real world situations with the parents being an integral part of ABA therapy. PBS also offers respite services for your family.

<https://www.teampbs.com/>

Family Support Network for Employment

FSNE is a family-led coalition advocating for employment opportunities and jobs in the open labour market for individuals with developmental disabilities who face higher employment barriers.

[Click here to find out their mission and explore resources.](#)

Rainbow Community Calendar

[The Rainbow Community Calendar](#) from SPECTRUM collects 2SLGBTQIA+ events from organizations across Waterloo Region (and sometimes in Guelph-Wellington). SPECTRUM's events will include the name in the title. Please read the details of each event carefully.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Ontario Caregiver Association

- *SCALE Program: Caregiver Needs and Well-being*: [SCALE \(Supporting Caregiver Awareness, Learning and Empowerment\)](#) focuses on topics relevant to new or experienced caregivers, including caregiver stress, managing feelings of anxiety or guilt, and self-care for the caregiver.
- *Caregiver 101*: Learn about caregiving roles, conflicts in caregiving, caregiver burnout, what to expect, developing resilience, and what supports are available. Access the online course [here](#).
- *Young Caregivers Connect*: Young Caregivers Connect is a website to help young caregivers aged 15-25. The website was designed in collaboration with, and for, young caregivers and offers information and resources and a way to connect that address their unique needs. Visit the website [here](#).
- *Time to Talk Podcast*: Join Host Michelle Jobin along with experts and caregivers, to discuss things that matter most to caregivers. Access the podcast [here](#).
- *Caregiving Communities* : a new portal that provides an easy way for people to search for organizations in their community that can help with: Grocery pick up and delivery, delivery of prepared meals, medication pick-up, social support – friendly phone calls, accessing communication devices like a tablet, mental health support, spiritual support, providing things to do like books, games and crosswords. www.ontariocaregiver.ca/caregivingcommunities

Family Compass Waterloo Region

Family Compass Waterloo Region is a central website to guide families to services for children, youth, and families in our community. The website offers the option to find information about general services for children and youth as well as specialized services that can help to address developmental concerns. To learn more, please visit <https://www.familycompasswr.ca>.

Fostering Information from Family & Children Services

Are you interested in learning more about fostering? For general information about fostering, please visit <https://www.facswaterloo.org/foster>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Partners for Planning

Every high school graduate deserves a bright future. The Beyond Graduation Toolkit can help families think creatively, collaborate with school teams, and explore pathways that can lead to a full and meaningful life for their son or daughter once they reach the end of their high school career. Designed for parents with a child transitioning out of high school in the next few years, this new toolkit provides critical concepts and resources that can help parents prepare for this transition. It includes:

[Partners for Planning - Planning for a Good Life Beyond Graduation Toolkit - Overview \(planningnetwork.ca\)](#)

The Royal Mental Health Care & Research

The Royal Mental Health Care & Research is one of Canada's foremost mental health care, teaching and research hospitals, located in Ottawa. The Institute of Mental Health Research, affiliated with the University of Ottawa, brings together leading mental health professionals, scientists, and technology to gain a deeper understanding of the brain, and investigate innovative approaches to preventing and treating mental illness. To learn about The Royal's programs, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/3dRvlo2>

The Vulnerable Persons Registry

The Vulnerable Persons Registry promotes communication between vulnerable persons, the people who support them and the police. This information will assist officers when responding to an emergency involving the vulnerable individual. The registry provides quick access to critical information about a registered person, such as who to call in an emergency, a detailed physical description, and any particular sensitivities that the person may experience.

www.vulnerablepersonsregistry.ca

EarlyON Onsite Services

EarlyON Centres partner with a variety of community agencies to provide onsite appointments for your child and family. **[Learn more.](#)**

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Breakaway Passport Services

Breakaway Passport Services is a unique, person-centred approach to providing people with meaningful, engaging, Passport-approved activities. The team at Breakaway has worked in the field of developmental services for over 20 years combined. Their mission is to enhance the experience of people who live with intellectual disabilities by supporting them to engage in their community, develop relationships, pursue interests, and direct their lives. Connect with the team at www.breakawaypassportservices.com, breakawaypassport@gmail.com, or call 519-721-7932.

Indwell

Indwell is a Christian charity creating affordable housing communities to support people seeking health, wellness & belonging. They are one of the fastest-growing developers of new supportive affordable housing in Ontario. Looking for housing? Visit <https://indwell.ca>

Imagine Canada

Imagine Canada has a ton of great resources and information on non-profit and charity sector-related policy in their newsletter, The Early Alert. <https://bit.ly/3IH2kQg>

Qualia Counselling Services

Qualia Counselling Services is accepting new clients at all six locations with no waitlist. Qualia Counselling Services offers counselling sessions, in person and by telehealth, with skilled clinicians. They offer services for children (5+), adults, families and couples. Qualia Counselling Services provides the most evidence-based interventions to help individuals of all ages become their best self. In addition to therapeutic services, Qualia offers a robust selection of professional development courses, workshops, lunch & learns, bootcamps and CBT supervision to professionals. Follow the link provided for further details. <https://qualiacounselling.com/training/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Support Groups

Parents for Children's Mental Health (PCMH)

If you are a parent/caregiver worried about your child, or a young person looking for help yourself – please reach out. Our network of child and youth mental health centres has 4000 professionals ready to help children, youth and families with free counselling and treatment. We provide care in person, on the phone and virtually. No problem is too big or small. Find your closest child and youth mental health centre here: <https://www.family.cmho.org/>

PFLAG Waterloo, Wellington & Perth Region (Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays)

The Waterloo Wellington Perth Chapter of PFLAG invites you to attend our support group focusing on topics of interest to parents, family and friends of LGBTQ individuals. PFLAG Canada is Canada's only national organization that helps all Canadians with issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

More info at: <https://www.facebook.com/PFLAG.WWP/>

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario (APSGO) is for parents struggling with the behavior of a child, youth or young adult. APSGO support groups help parents/guardians develop effective strategies, set limits and boundaries, and build better relationships with their children. The group currently meets via Zoom on Wednesday at 7:15 pm. Go to apsgo.ca for more information.

Province-Wide Monthly Virtual Groups for Adults with FASD

The Fetal Alcohol Resource Program at ABLE2 is happy to announce the first two Province-wide virtual groups for adults living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). They include the FASD Educational Group and the FASD Social Group. Both groups will be held monthly. You can participate at your comfort level from the comfort of your home. For more info contact the Fetal Alcohol Resource Program at 613-761-9252 Ext. 234 or fasd@able2.org.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support, formally known as The Black Parent & Caregiver Support Group (BPSG) was created to provide a safe space for families of African descent to come together to meet and connect, share resources, expertise and needs, inspire and support one another through our unique and often challenging and isolating journey of raising Black children or supporting a sibling, of any age, with a disability. This is a volunteer-run group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. via ZOOM. There will be guest speakers, resource sharing, support and mentorship opportunities for attendees.

Contact: For more details or to register, please contact us at bpsgroup2020@gmail.com.

South Asian Wellness Group

The South Asian Wellness Group is a drop-in group every Thursday from 6 pm to 7:30 pm on Zoom with occasional in-person meetings. With a South Asian Peer Facilitator fluent in Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu, this group will focus on coping, recovery, and fostering hope from a South Asian lens. This group is intended for folks who identify as South Asian to connect and build community with one another. ALL Self Help & Peer Support groups are open to adults living in Waterloo Wellington communities who identify as living with mental health or/and substance use issues. To join this group or if you have questions about it, please send us an email: selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca. To view this information in Punjabi, please [click here](#).

The A-Team of Waterloo Region

The A-Team of Waterloo Region is primarily run by individuals with Asperger's Syndrome, for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome, with some assistance from Bridges to Belonging. Their goal is to create a safe and welcoming environment to meet fellow adults (age 18+) with Asperger's Syndrome (ASD – level 1), discuss topics of interest, share experiences, and embrace their neurological diversity. Please go to <https://ateamwaterlooregion.wordpress.com/about/> for more information on how to register and attend the upcoming virtual meetings!

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CIA - Connecting, Interests and Activities

CIA is a group in Waterloo Region for adults (18+) with Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) level 1. The purpose of the group is to create a safe and supportive space for people to have fun, meet and connect with others, and take part in activities. Join if you're looking for a positive place of belonging! Meetings take place at the Downtown Community Centre (35 B Weber Street West), in the Multi-Purpose Room on the second Thursday of each month. This is a drop-in group, so folks are welcome to join anytime between 5 and 7 pm. The next meetings will take place Thursday, August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, and December 14.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Kelly Groh at 519-731-3923 or grohtech@xplornet.com.

Virtual Support Group for Adolescents with FASD

The return of the Virtual Support Group for Teens with FASD. This group meets every Wednesday night at 7 – 8:30 pm.

Contact Rob for more information rmacdonald@lutherwood.ca.

CADDAC Support Groups

CADDAC's virtual support groups are a safe space for you to share your experiences with others who understand what it means to have ADHD or parent a child with ADHD. [Programs and Events - CADDAC](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

Vulnerable Persons Alert - Support Bill 74

There is a Bill in front of the Provincial legislature right now called Bill 74 Missing Persons Amendment Act. It proposes to amend the Amber Alert system to add vulnerable people - children and adults with disabilities, adults with dementia, other vulnerabilities. The bill passed second reading and is waiting for the Justice Policy Committee to set dates to hear deputations to then pass it in the house. You can help push the government to pass this act! Show your support by emailing your MPP and ask them to pass Bill 74. Sign the petition here:

https://www.moniquetaylormpp.ca/vulnerable_persons_alert

Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada

Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada is looking for young people (ages 14-18) with a passion for supporting mental health and well-being of youth in their community to join the Stress Coach Chatbot Advisory Council.

Anyone in Canada aged 14-18 is eligible to apply!

By joining this council you will:

- Be one of the first people to try the NEW Stress Coach Chatbot out and learn stress management strategies.
- Have your voice heard by providing feedback on the Chatbot to better support people your age.
- Gain volunteer hours to graduate high school.

[Register here by September 25, 2023.](#)

Infant & Child Studies Group at University of Waterloo

Infant and Child Studies Group is a group of researchers interested in better understanding child cognition: so how kids learn! All studies are designed as games for children to play while we observe how they respond to various toys, videos, or sounds. The activities are fun for the kids, and help us understand concepts like how children learn new words, when children can begin to understand math, or what learning strategies kids use to understand new concepts. We deliver studies in person, as well as online and in take-home formats. Learn more or sign up at: <http://uwaterloo.ca/infant-and-child-studies-group/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Laurier University

Volunteers are needed for a Laurier University students' research study on the lived experiences of parents with children with developmental disabilities navigating the school system. They are looking for parents or caregivers of a child with a developmental disability using the public school system in Ontario. Participants will complete a background questionnaire (5-10 minutes) and a one-on-one semi-structured interview (30-90 minutes). Participants will also be able to add, remove or clarify any information shared during the interview by reviewing the transcript. To participate, please contact dias8170@mylaurier.ca.

Health Nexus: The Confidence Project

The "Confidence Project" aims to deliver to pregnant, breast/chest feeding Canadians, and those planning to become parents vaccine information to better able to make informed decisions about the COVID-19 vaccine for themselves and their families. The Confidence Project seeks breast/chest feeding, pregnant people, planning to be or new parents to respond anonymously to our survey on the COVID-19 vaccine, before, during pregnancy or while nursing a baby. To respond to the survey in English, French, Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Arabic, [click here](#).

SickKids – Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion

Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion: if you are a researcher or community builder, please take a moment to [complete this survey](#) and help inform the development of new ways to communicate child development to parents.

Community Living Ontario

Community Living Ontario is partnering with Jess Whitley at the University of Ottawa to conduct a survey to better understand children's inclusive schooling experience. They are interested in hearing about your child(ren)'s experiences with inclusion – including specific questions about exclusion, seclusion, and restraint. The survey is for families whose child(ren) are attending school in Ontario this school year (September 2022- June 2023), whether or not they have experienced exclusion, seclusion or restraint. It will take between 5 and 25 minutes to complete, depending on your experiences and how much information you choose to share. The information you share is completely anonymous, and the data will be owned by the research team. To participate, [please visit this link](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

OMSSA Recreation Providers Survey

This Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) survey collects baseline information about recreational care availability across Ontario. Results will help identify gaps in provision, staffing and funding across the province.

[Take the OMSSA Recreation Providers Survey here.](#)

Laurier University Study

Engaging communities in developing culturally relevant solutions to autism service disparities. Are you a service provider with a minimum of 1 year experience working directly with autistic children and or caregiver of autistic children from newcomer or indigenous families? Researchers at Laurier would like to hear from you. Participation in this study will take approximately 2 hours and all participants will receive \$100 gift certificate of their choice or cash e-transfer. If you're interested, please contact larc@wlu.ca.

CanChild

Researchers at CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research have developed a new questionnaire to measure parents' experiences with healthcare services for their children with disabilities. Now we would like to have parents test it out and share their feedback! Complete a set of questions to tell us about your experiences with healthcare services. You will receive a \$20 e-gift card upon completion! Interested in participating? Want more information? Please email the study team at mpoc2@mcmaster.ca.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Lab at Queen's University

The ASD Lab at Queen's University is running an online study called the Tone of Voice study. We are trying to better understand how youth perceive emotions through tone of voice. We are seeking youth with and without autism between the ages of 13-18 to participate in our study. The study takes about 75 minutes to complete over Zoom with an experimenter, and youth will be compensated \$30 for their time. If you have question or would like to participate, please contact Daniel at tov.study@queensu.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Accessibility Standards Canada

Apply to join ASC's new technical committees:

1. [Technical committee for accessible and equitable artificial intelligence systems](#)
2. [Technical committee for existing built environment](#)

These committees will each create a standard in their area. The knowledge and experience of people with disabilities and other experts are instrumental to the creation of world-class standards.

Deadline: You have until August 10, 2023, to apply.

Participation in committees is on a volunteer basis. If members do not represent an organization, they could receive compensation.

Who should apply?

Diversity and inclusion are at the core of our organization. We aim for the same thing when creating our committees. We are looking for 12 to 18 members per committee in the following categories:

- People with disabilities
- Indigenous peoples*
- Consumer and public interest
- Academic and research bodies
- Non-governmental organizations
- Government bodies and authorities with jurisdiction
- Labour and unions
- Standards development bodies
- Federally regulated industries and workplaces
- Federally regulated public sector bodies, municipalities, and territorial private-sector firms
- Business and industry

*Please note: People with disabilities and Indigenous peoples are encouraged to apply. They can be part of any stakeholder category.

It could be you! [Apply today by visiting our website.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Accessibility Standards Canada Continued...

Public Review of Draft Accessibility Standard on Employment

Review the draft accessibility standard on employment!

- **[CAN-ASC-1.1 Standard on Employment](#)**

The goal of this standard is to address work-related barriers caused by both individual actions and systems. This standard envisions a work environment that is accessible, inclusive, and barrier free. It imagines a place that is free of discrimination, regardless of a worker's (dis) abilities. We want your feedback!

Please **[send us your input](#)**.

Key requirements of the standard

This standard will:

- Develop organizational systems, policies, and practices. Develop structural supports and show leadership
- Engage, educate, and create a supportive culture in the work environment
- Create a disability management system. Accommodate the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in the work environment
- Identify, prevent, and remove barriers encountered during recruitment, hiring, and onboarding
- Identify, prevent, and remove barriers encountered in worker retention, professional development, pay equity (compensation), performance management, and job separation

Please consult the **[draft standard on our website](#)**. Your feedback will help ensure that our accessibility standard effectively removes and prevents barriers. Leaning on the knowledge and lived experience of a diversity of stakeholders, including people with disabilities, leads to better standards.

The public review will run until Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 11:59 pm.

Options to provide feedback

You can provide your feedback on the draft standard using one of the following methods:

- **[Complete the online form](#)** on our website.
- Download the **[fillable form in a PDF format](#)** and send it to us by email, along with any related files.
- Submit your comments in text, audio, or video format.

You can find all the necessary instructions on how to send us your feedback on our **[website](#)**.

Should you need any assistance with this public review process or have questions, please **[contact us by email](#)**.

[View this message in French.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Waterloo Region Police Services

In order to provide Waterloo Region residents with the highest level of safety and service, and in preparation to set goals for the next three years, the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) will be hosting focus groups to discuss the future of policing in Waterloo Region. The purpose of these meetings will be to identify priorities, safety concerns, emerging trends, and collaboration opportunities that will inform WRPS' strategic planning.

They are reaching out with an invitation to attend a focus group to determine the priorities of the Hospitals and Mental Health community.

If you are unable to attend this meeting but would like to share your ideas, all residents of Waterloo Region are invited to complete a community survey (<https://forms.office.com/r/6tWfNCqDz2>) or to contact kelsey.gilmour@wrps.on.ca with comments or concerns.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Community News

EarlyON Update

As of June 1, 2023, we will begin our summer hours at all EarlyON locations. For EarlyON | Oak Creek (Kitchener), EarlyON | Roger Street (Waterloo) and EarlyON | Water Street (Cambridge), this means a change to our hours of operation. Please visit [our website](#) on or after June 1, 2023.

If attending EarlyON, please ensure that each adult entering EarlyON has their own KEyON account. KEyON accounts can still be created onsite at EarlyON locations or by participants offsite. Government issue photo ID will be required to obtain a KEyON key tag in-person at an EarlyON location.

For questions about this update to our policies, please email earlyyearsinfo@ytr.ymca.ca or visit our [EarlyON Experience page](#) for more information.

Bridges to Belonging Announces ABIDE

Bridges to Belonging is thrilled to announce ABIDE (Access, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity). Equity-seeking people and families, grassroots ethnocultural organizations, and religious groups will have access to A Community Connections and Capacity Building Facilitator as a resource to access programs, services, and community resources for people with diverse identities including disabilities to live their best lives as valued citizens across Waterloo Region. For more information contact info@bridgestobelonging.ca.