

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 152
December 2022

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What's In This Issue?

Believe it or not, it's already December and the last month of 2022! And while 2022 was another year of pandemic-related stressors and uncertainties, we're so grateful to the WRFN community for making this such a memorable year!

We'd like to thank you for helping make our events including Evening of Elegance, the IEP Workshop, and Family Activity Day a success. It has been so great to safely connect with our families and supporters in person again, and we hope we can continue this into the new year!

Although we may be ready to ring in the new year ASAP, there are still a few events happening at WRFN and in the community that we think are worth celebrating. Read through this issue of Family Pulse to see what's new and happening in the community.

Wishing you a lovely and safe holiday season!



Support WRFN

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

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Region District School Board - Special Education Advisory Committee Update
Submitted by Carmen Sutherland, WRFN SEAC Representative

This month's SEAC meeting featured a discussion on the Right to Read strategy. The goal is for students to be reading by the end of grade 2. The results from the EQAO from previous years show that 30 per cent of students are not reading at the rate they should be. This is even more true for English language learners.

The Board has a new research-based strategy for teaching reading. One important aspect is that reading will be taught explicitly (as opposed to encouraging students to guess words based on context, for example). Some classrooms are using Lexia for both ACE students and students with learning disabilities.

IEPs will be sent home to families November 30. Alternative report cards for ACE students have also been delayed because of the data breach last school year.

The next SEAC meeting will take place on **December 14, 2022**.

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Special Education Advisory Committee Update ***Submitted by Karen Applebee***

The WCDSB SEAC met at the School Education Centre and was presented an update on the Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP) by Jennifer Ritsma.

Gerald Foran continued the meeting with a review of how the board has used some of the tutoring funding supplied by the province. The monies allocated for tutoring were originally set to be spent from September 1 through to December 31. The final December deadline was then extended to the end of March. Some of the programs running with these funds include after school homework clubs. In the secondary schools these are drop-in programs while in elementary school focus groups were created.

In particular for the students with special education needs the tutoring programs focus on literacy to fill any gaps for students in grades 6 - 8.

A quick update on CUPE was discussed and the possibility of new members to our SEAC.

Association updates were shared.

Trustee updates were also shared. Please find more information here:

<https://www.wcdsb.ca/wcdsb-board-meeting-bulletin-october-2022/>

The next SEAC meeting will be on **December 7, 2022.**

Holding it All

By Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator

As a person who celebrates Christmas, I remember the first time I didn't 'feel it.' I think I was 13 and I thought, *where is the Christmas magic?* Why do I not feel the buzz of excitement in my heart?

In contrast, 2022 is a 'feeling it' year for me because I happen to be getting the family Christmas of my dreams. But I'm older now, so I know that it is not that simple for everyone.

First, many of our fantastic community members do not celebrate Christmas and it is probably hard for them when it seems like the world is engaged in a holiday that isn't part of their traditions. For others, Christmas is a painful time of year whether because of grief or money or any number of reasons.

I am so glad that I am wiser now, so that I can hold all of it —a place for all my joy, along with anyone else's feelings this time of year. Please know that I, and the team at Waterloo Region Family Network, do hold it all for you. I feel like I say this a lot in my newsletter write-ups, but just think of me as one of those holiday songs that repeats in your brain over and over (or for people who are not familiar with these, imagine the equivalent). I just want to make sure you know. *wink*

What's Happening at WRFN

At this time, most WRFN programs are being offered through a virtual format or through phone and email connections. We are slowly transitioning into some programs and services being available in person. However, we understand that these remain to be challenging times for many. Please reach out and let us know how we can help you and your family.

Do you have a question about community resources or child development?

WRFN Drop-Ins at EarlyON

Meet with Erin, our Family Resource Coach

Erin will be hosting in-office drop-in meetings at various EarlyON locations this month. Meetings do not require an appointment, but are on a first-come, first-served basis.

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Dec 9	Early ON Cedar Creek 55 Hilltop Dr, Ayr, ON	9:30-11 am
Dec 14	EarlyON Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
Dec 20	EarlyON Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am
Dec 21	Early ON Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am



Contact Erin -

erin.sutherland@wrfn.info
226-808-5460



www.wrfn.info



Meet Our New Family Resource Coaches



In October, WRFN was able to bring TWO new Family Resource Coaches onto the team to help Erin support families in the region. The first Family Resource Coach is someone you may recognize from the WRFN team. Leah, WRFN's previous Administrative Assistant, brings 23 years of experience with non-profit organizations in various social service settings the majority of which has been in the Developmental Services sector. Leah finds great joy in supporting individuals and families to find the supports they need to create lives they find meaningful and fulfilling. She understands that each individual and family has unique needs & strengths and uses that as a guide to find community connections that are a good fit.

Joining Leah is Marla Pender who will be working 10 hours a week as an FRC with us. Marla has been working for non-profit and government organizations for over 25 years in the areas of youth engagement, accessibility and volunteer engagement. Marla holds a degree in Community Psychology and is working toward completing a Master of Counselling Psychology. She is looking forward to collaborating with you and discussing your interests and goals.

Both Leah and Marla bring many talents, gifts and experience to their new roles. They will both be supporting families with youth 16 years and older and self-advocates.

Contact:

Leah - leah.bowman@wrfn.info - 226-898-9301

Marla - marla.pender@wrfn.info - 226-338-7274

Highlights From Family Activity Day



Thank you to all who joined us at our Family Activity Day in November. It was such a pleasure seeing families interacting with each other and taking part in this community event. We hope to see you all again at future events!

Hello A New Chapter families!

As the holiday season draws near, we have wishes and hopes for those dear. How the powers that be can make them come true is the question we're asking of you.

So before we meet in December, please jot down three things to remember. Three topics important is what we desire and a good list from you will inspire.

Our December meeting will consist of a discussion of the needs of our loved ones which require the attention of government. Examples include Passport Funding adjustments and Housing Initiatives. This list of needs will be gathered from our group and subsequently passed along to WRFN for its advocacy work.



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.



December 6, 2022

Our December meeting will consist of a discussion of the needs of our loved ones which require the attention of government (Passport Funding, Housing, etc.).

In preparation for the meeting, please think of three things you believe the government should provide.

Feel free to wear a festive outfit, decorate your zoom background, and have a tasty drink!

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.

This is an opportunity for you to have your say. In preparation for the meeting, please think of three things you believe the government should provide. As in a letter to Santa, what would be your three wishes?

And in the spirit of the holiday season, please feel free to wear a festive hat or sweater, decorate your zoom background, and have a tasty hot drink and treat handy to enjoy during the meeting!

Join us online on Tuesday, December 6 from 7:30-9 pm. Afterwards, you can stay on the Zoom call to ask questions on any topic during our Ask Us Anything segment from 9-9:30pm. Please rsvp to maryjpike@hotmail.com to let us know if you are able to attend. A zoom link will be sent out the day prior.

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.

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. The next regular meeting will take place November 30.

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 3:00-4:00 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.

Monica Place

Monica Place is offering "The Village Drop-In." Young parents who live in Waterloo Region are invited to join a weekly drop-in group at Monica Place Waterloo and Monica Place Cambridge. Bus tickets can be provided if needed. Snacks are provided along with time to chat with other young parents and playtime with other children (including music and story time). There is no cost to this group. If you have any questions, please let Judy (judyf@monicaplace.ca) or Andrea (andrear@monicaplace.ca) know.

Infant Massage

This is a one-on-one 5-week course for families with babies 0-12 months of age. This program encourages and supports families through teaching stroke techniques, offers a relaxing environment, a place to ask questions, learn with others, and receive referrals to other community organizations.

Shawna will be offering one-on-one and group sessions in clients' homes. Fees are \$150 (about \$30 a week). Register at www.kwinfantmassage.ca. Please email shawna@kwinfantmassage.ca if you have any questions.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Monarch House Waterloo

Monarch House Waterloo has a new in-person group service in January 2023. Monarch House will be implementing an Intermediate Level Sexual Health Group taking place Wednesday evenings from 5-7pm for 12 weeks. There will be a children's group (ages approx. 7-11 years old) learning about various sexual health related topics. Running alongside the children's group, caregivers will participate in group and individual sessions. These will be facilitated by a Psychotherapist to provide support and guidance surrounding the sexual health content and foster skills to engage and communicate with their child on the topics of the group. For more information, contact info@moarchhouse.ca or call 519-514-5770.

Rainbow Drop In

How Does Learning Happen? Through Play! Join other 2SLGBTQIA+ children (aged 0-6), caring adults, and families in play and exploration together. EarlyON facilitators are available to provide support and information around early learning topics, community resources, programs, and referrals in a play-based environment. Rainbow drop-in takes place at EarlyON | Roger Street (YMCA Early Years) 161 Roger St, Waterloo. Upcoming dates:

- Saturday January 28, 2023 9 -11am
- Saturday February 25, 2023 9 -11am
- Saturday March 25, 2023 9 -11am
- Saturday April 29, 2023 9 -11am
- Saturday May 27, 2023 9 -11am
- Saturday June 24, 2023 9 -11am

<https://www.ourspectrum.com/2022/10/12/rainbow-family-drop-in/>

Fun Fearless Females

There are a ton of great activities being hosted by Fun Fearless Females this month. As usual, join every Monday for Stretch and Unwind. Special events this December include a dinner out, a Holiday movie night, and a Holiday party! Check it all out at:

[Events — Fun Fearless Females](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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!**

KW Habilitation

On November 30, KW Hab Activities go on sale! ArtShine, Glee with Katie, Drumming with Sam, Creative Music with Len, Music with Katie, and other KW Hab activities will be coming up in January. To see a full calendar of events, visit

<https://shop.kwhab.ca/calendar/>.

To register, please visit <https://shop.kwhab.ca/>.

Cambridge Career Connections - Youth Job Connection

The Youth Job Connection program serves youth who experience barriers to employment by providing supports beyond traditional job search and placement opportunities. Program features include:

- Participants receive minimum wage for 60-90 hours of employment-related workshop
- Assistance securing employment from a skilled Job Developer
- Financial placement supports for participants and hiring incentives for employers
- Ongoing support provided through coaching and mentoring

<https://cambridgecareerconnections.com/for-job-seekers/youth-job-connection/>

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region: Virtual Open Space

Looking to connect to folks on a weekly basis?

Join one of the virtual Open Spaces on Monday evenings! Both begin at 6:30pm.

Email Kim Sproul for more details at kim.sproul@eafwr.on.ca

<https://www.eafwr.on.ca/programs/community-development/open-space/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Artshine Virtual Accessible Art For Kids, Teens & Adults

Social distancing doesn't need to rob you of the joy that comes from expanding your art skills! Artshine has live video lessons via Zoom for all ages. Art supplies will be mailed to you in advance of classes! Maximum 20 participants for personalized attention. [Click here](#) for more information!

Recreational Respite Virtual Services

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 December 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!](#)

LCOworks – Employment training and job connections for people with developmental disabilities in Ontario

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.

Return of the Dragon

Return of the Dragon Martial Arts offers a safe and positive environment for students to build their skills and confidence. Whether you are looking to lose weight or wanting to learn self defense, they can help you achieve your goals. They offer Kung Fu, Kickboxing, Jiu Jitsu, Bootcamp and self defense seminars for all ages and genders. Visit www.rotdma.com or call 519-503-6087 to learn more.

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](#).

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>

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>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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/>

You're invited to take a look at MOVE by GoodLife Kids!

MOVE is designed exclusively to get youth with special needs active, and is offered FREE to families. Registered participants get access to three live online small-group sessions each week led by one of MOVE's passionate coaches.

[Learn more at: goodlifekids.com/MOVE/](https://goodlifekids.com/MOVE/)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops & Training

Lutherwood Work Access and Safety Training

Are you or do you know of someone looking to start a job, but they are lacking a certificate to get started? Lutherwood, in partnership with CLAC-Ontario, is offering training support for individuals looking for work. Lutherwood will assist eligible individuals in funding their safety training, with courses including: First Aid and CPR; Working at Heights; WHMIS 2015; Forklift Operator; Joint Health and Safety Committee; And many other certificates. To find out if you are eligible, contact the closest Lutherwood office in either Cambridge (519-623-9380), Kitchener (519-743-2460), or Guelph (519-822-4141) to complete an assessment.

Woolwich Counselling

This winter, 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. Here are a few of the workshops and support groups coming up:

- Strengthening Connection With Our Children and Teens: Dec. 1, 7-8 pm
- Caregiver Support Group: Dec. 1, 1-2 pm
- Managing the Stress of the Holiday Season: Dec. 5, 7-8 pm
- Grief and Special Days: Dec. 13, 7-8 pm

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

Bridges to Belonging

Join Bridges to Belonging and other Waterloo Region families for our next Future Planning workshop on Thursday, January 26 from 6:30-8:30 pm. This Future Planning Workshop will feature David Amy from Amy, Appleby, and Brennan. David will discuss Wills, Executors & Trustees, Power of Attorney, Trusts, and the Henson Trust. Learn more and register here: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/2022-2023-future-planning-webinar-series-tickets-411455122347>

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 6 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 | [jdigirolamo@ccrw.org](mailto:jdigiolamo@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>.

Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT)

Children and Youth Planning Table has released the [3rd disaggregated Snapshot Report](#) from the Youth Impact Survey—Gender Identity. This snapshot contains the most differences to date amongst subpopulations. Please take a moment to review.

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 8 small group sessions where people with lived expertise of poverty could share their personal stories. They heard about the struggle, resilience, frustration, and perseverance that is poverty in Canada. 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. PBS will conduct an assessment in the home environment to determine the goals with the family which often include addressing challenging behaviours and increasing skills in a variety of areas that are targeted. ABA is implemented in real world situations with the parents being an integral part of ABA therapy.

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

Lutherwood

Lutherwood provides support for those looking for meaningful employment in Waterloo Region. Link for job seekers [Let's Connect! - Lutherwood.](#)

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. While live sessions have passed, you can still watch all recordings online.
- *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](#).

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.

Family Compass has added a page specifically pertaining Covid-19 resources for children, youth, and families. It can be reached at <https://bit.ly/3t0lkar>.

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>.

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 \(planningnetwork.ca\)](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

The Family Support Network for Employment

FSNE is proud to announce the launch of the “Learning Path to Employment,” an online course designed for families of individuals with a developmental disability. The goal of the course is to provide individuals and their families with the knowledge and tools they need to advocate for, and secure, meaningful paid employment. The course can be found here: <https://fsne.ca/courses/learning-path-to-employment/>. The course can be accessed 24/7, is free, and there is no time limit in which you must complete it.

Take5

Take5 is an online space for children and youth in foster care, in group homes, or living away from their parents in Ontario. On Take5 you can find information for your age on things like: coping with stress, stuff about your identity and culture, relationships, and who to ask for help. You can also find activities, podcasts, videos and online events. Take5 is for children 6 to 12 and youth 13 and above. Visit the [Take5 website](#).

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Inclusion Canada

Family Matters: Job Loss & COVID-19 Findings Now Available

This project worked with families and self-advocates to better understand the impact of job loss during the pandemic and considerations for future supports for families and individuals. You can see the report and its findings here:

<https://inclusioncanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Final-Report-EN-Oct-27.pdf>

Pathways to Home Ownership

The Pathways to Homeownership project demonstrated inclusive models of homeownership and created resources to help people with disabilities (and their families) purchase their own homes. Inclusion Canada is currently working on new resources to support Pathways. It will be coming soon. Learn more here:

<https://bit.ly/3B4n0E2>.

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. Waterloo PCMH [regular support group meetings](#) will take place Dec. 27. The [ADHD support group](#) will be Dec. 21. 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/>

Preemie Parents of Waterloo-Wellington

Preemie Parents of Waterloo-Wellington remains available online through a private Facebook group. They look forward to returning to the Cambridge Family Early Years Centre as soon as it is deemed safe to do so. In the meantime, they suggest you review the Canadian Premature Babies Foundation's website to see the supports and resources available to you during this pandemic.

Visit: <https://www.cpbf-fbpc.org/covid19>

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!

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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. This is a drop-in group, so folks are welcome to join anytime between 5 and 7 pm. The next meeting will be taking place December 8. If you have any questions, please reach out to Kelly Groh at 519-731-3923.

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 7:15pm. Go to [apsgo.ca](https://www.apsgo.ca) for more information.

Strong Moms, Safe Kids

The Strong Moms, Safe Kids group is now accepting referrals for the winter session! Winter session will take place weekly on Wednesdays from 5:30-8 pm starting January 4, 2023 and concluding on March 8 2023. This program is for mothers who have experienced any type of abuse in an intimate relationships and their children, ages 5-18, who have witnessed abuse in their homes. Families of all cultures are welcomed. Those not comfortable with English can have an interpreter provided for them. An intake call is required to participate, please contact Janet De Gazon to make a referral or for more information, at jdegazon@kwcounselling.com or 519-884-0000 x252.

<https://www.kwcounselling.com/counselling/group-supports/>

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. Sign up for our last meetings of 2022! [Programs and Events - CADDAC](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

Queens University Research

Participate in Online Emotional Research

This online study is looking at the emotional life of adolescents on the autism spectrum or neurotypical controls. Participants and their caregiver will complete a few questionnaires and will receive a \$20 and a \$10 Amazon gift card for their time. Looking for parents of individuals who are non-verbal, aged 12-18, on the autism spectrum. Contact asd@queensu.ca or call 613-533-2894.

McMaster University Research on Postpartum Depression Treatment

McMaster University is conducting a research study to determine if women who receive an online peer-delivered CBT-Informed support for postpartum depression improve more than women who receive standard healthcare. You may be eligible if you are living in Southern Ontario, 18 yrs+ and have a baby under 12 months. For more information please email: peercbt@mcmaster.ca

University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science

University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science is seeking infants aged 18-47 months for a vision study to test for a new way to measure how well babies/toddlers can see. Contact Dr. Lisa Christian lisa.christian@uwaterloo.ca for more information.

University of Calgary

Exploring the Mental Health Benefits of Participating in Physical Activity Study

A senior psychology student at the University of Calgary is recruiting youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years, who have been diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disability and engage in some form of physical activity (i.e., daily walking, running, soccer, biking). These youth will be asked to complete a screener survey and a 1-hour interview (online or in-person). Youth will be given a \$20 gift card as a token of appreciation for their participation. For more information, please contact Henna at henna.hans1@ucalgary.ca. All inquiries will be kept strictly confidential. This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (REB#21-0687).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Infant and Child Mental Health Lab at York University

The Infant and Child Mental Health Lab at York University is inviting caregivers and their infants (aged 3 - 10 months), to participate in a 2-part online research study. The first part examines caregiver-infant interaction at times when the caregiver is busy with common, everyday tasks. The second part examines the role of caregivers' experiences as they interact with their infants. To learn more about our study, please visit our webpage: <https://bohr.lab.yorku.ca/participate-in-our-studies/> Interested participants can email us directly at yorkparentingproject@gmail.com, or sign up using the form on our webpage.

York Parenting Project Study

Are you the caregiver of an infant 3 – 10 months old? You may be eligible to participate in an interesting virtual study examining caregiver experiences and infants' reactions to caregivers' use of technology. This study will take approximately 45 minutes to complete + a few questionnaires. Participants will be paid \$20 and will be entered into a raffle to win 1 of 4 prizes valued at \$150-\$200. If you are interested in participating, please contact yorkparentingproject@gmail.com.

York University

Study Asian-Canadian youth identities in a pandemic era: Arts-based research

Are you an Asian-Canadian youth between the ages of 16 - 24 years with an ancestry/origin from the following countries: China, Philippines, or India? Would you like to participate in an arts-based study to explore youth identity? If yes, we invite you to participate in our project. You will take part in drawing a simple visual art, followed by an individual interview. For further details, please contact Attia Khan at attiakh2@yorku.ca, Tel: 416- 736-2100 Ext. 44527.

Time Poverty Study

A York University Masters Student is looking for participants for a study investigating time poverty. They are looking for participants 18-65 years old, who are caregivers (paid or unpaid), and immigrant women from the English-speaking Caribbean. Contact for more information: taylersi@yorku.ca.

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Empowered Kids Ontario & McMaster University

In partnership with Empowered Kids Ontario, researchers at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University are completing an evaluation of virtual care services offered to children across Ontario. If your child currently receives virtual care in Ontario (or has received virtual care in the past), and you are interested in learning more about participating in this research, please contact us at ekoeval@mcmaster.ca or call 905-525-9140 ext. 21263.

Siblings: Citizens with a Cause Is Recruiting!

Siblings: Citizens with a Cause is a group of sibling advocates with a vision for a more inclusive Canada. Our team of siblings have important advocacy roles at Community Living Ontario, as they ensure that siblings of those who have disabilities are heard and represented in all settings. Their daily interactions with their siblings allow them to see first-hand the exclusion their siblings face, which is their motivation to advocate for a more inclusive Canada. This supportive network of youth shares personal stories, resources, and are a helping hand to anyone who would like it through advocacy initiatives such as their Siblings meetups. At these monthly webinars, youth and allies come together to discuss navigating life in Canada. If you have questions or wish to apply, contact: Agnes Palaganas, CLO's Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator, at apalaganas@communitylivingontario.ca or Payal Khazanachi, Director of Inclusion Initiatives at pkhazanachi@communitylivingontario.ca.

Join the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)!

The Re:Action4Inclusion Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is a provincial movement of youth from across Ontario that has steadily advocated for social change for over a decade. This movement is driven and empowered by youth leaders, with and without a disability, who see the importance of the basic human need to belong. This provincial network of youth is committed to overcoming the feelings of isolation and exclusion youth feel by embracing a culture of equity and inclusion. Interested in getting involved with the Youth Advisory Committee? Want to work with a team of like-minded people to make a difference? [Apply here!](#) Want to learn more? [Click here.](#)

And if you still have questions, contact: Agnes Palaganas, CLO's Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator, at apalaganas@communitylivingontario.ca or Nicole Canzoneri, Chair of YAC 2021–2022, at nicolcanzoneri@gmail.com.

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Psychology, Law and Neurodevelopment Research and Policy Group at U of G (PLAN)

PLAN is inviting youth and young adults between the ages of 12 and 24 with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) to participate in a study. Youth are eligible to participate whether they have had actual contact with the criminal justice system as our study asks about both hypothetical and real-world legal decisions. Youth will be asked to answer questions relevant to their own past experiences. To participate, youth must be able to speak English and must currently reside in Canada. Interested individuals can email: PLANLab@uoguelph.ca or call 519-824-4120 ext. 53622.

Partners 4 Planning

Last month we shared a message from the RDSP Action Coalition outlining a legal issue a person with a developmental disability may face after 2023 when trying to open an RDSP. While the federal government has a temporary measure in place, it will expire in 2023. This means that the only way a person with a disability who may not have legal capacity can open an RDSP is if another person becomes their legal guardian. Imagine someone having to relinquish ALL THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS simply to open an RDSP. And there are other situations where guardianship will be required in order to access and use an RDSP.

Please visit www.weneedaction.ca to learn more about the issue and what you can do to help. You can visit the RDSP Action Coalition on social media platforms to share our posts and contact Natalie Jones at njones@p4p.ca to receive materials you can share on your social media platforms.

The RDSP Action Coalition is comprised of representatives from [Autism Ontario](#), [Community Living Ontario](#), [Family Alliance Ontario](#), [PooranLaw](#) and [Partners for Planning](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Accessibility Standards Canada

You are invited to a [public review of a new accessibility standard!](#)

This public review will be your first opportunity to provide feedback on Accessibility Standards Canada's draft model standard for the built environment - accessibility. A second opportunity will be provided later before the standard is published.

As part of this public review, the technical committee welcomes your initial feedback. Input from Canadians is vital to the development of accessibility standards that remove and prevent barriers.

There are common areas where people with disabilities may encounter barriers in the built environment. This standard differs in many ways from other standards. It focusses on equity-based requirements that go beyond minimum technical requirements.

The built environment has many elements. To ensure a fulsome document, Accessibility Standards Canada has made the decision to draft it in two phases. **The first phase of the public review will run until Saturday, January 7, 2023 at 23:59.**

This public review of the draft standard covers the following topics: exterior and interior paths of travel, building entrances and access to storeys, ramps and curb ramps, elevators, stairs, doorways and doors including power door operators, controls, passenger loading zones and access aisles, washrooms and universal washrooms including showers, signs and wayfinding, illumination, assistive listening systems, emergency notification systems, and fire protection and refuge.

You can consult the [draft standard on this website](#).

You are invited to provide your feedback on the draft standard using one of the following means:

- By [completing the online form](#) and submitting your feedback directly through its website
- By downloading the fillable form in a PDF or Word format and sending it to ASC by email, along with any related files
- By submitting your comments in text, audio, or video format

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Accessibility Standards Canada continued...

All the necessary instructions on how to send us your feedback can be found on ASC's website. The Standards Team contact information is also provided should you need any assistance with this public review process or have any questions.

Please know that in the future second version of the standard, the technical committee will aim to make sure it serves as many persons with disabilities as possible.

During that second public review, the technical committee intends to:

- update and expand existing requirements
- examine the needs of persons from more disability communities, including persons who are neurodiverse and persons with environmental sensitivities
- develop parking requirements
- add diagrams
- include information to help readers understand how the Standard removes and prevents barriers in the built environment for everyone, including persons with disabilities

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Community News

Changes to Ministry of Health & Family-Managed Home Care funding

Guardianship is no longer a barrier to accessing Family-Managed Home Care (FMHC) funding. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has officially updated the definition of “Substitute Decision-Maker” in its FMHC Program specifications to include, “an individual managing Ontario government funding from the MCCSS specifically from the Passport Program, Ontario Works, and/or the Ontario Disability Support Program on behalf of the Client who is an adult.”

Together with Community Living Ontario, PooranLaw has been advocating for changes to the MOH policy for over three years. This change took effect on Thursday, September 1, 2022. [Read more](#) to learn how this news impacts people living with a disability and their families.

Inclusion Canada

Inclusion Canada is advocating for all federal political parties to fast-track

Bill C22, proposed legislation that would create a new Canada Disability Benefit. They are encouraging everyone to send a letter to their federal MP as soon as possible, while the legislation is being debated in the House of Commons. [Click here to find your member of parliament](#) and their contact details. By entering your postal code or just searching by your province you will then find your local MPs and their contact details, including their email address, where you can send an email on the importance of the Canada Disability Benefit and passing Bill C-22. Template letters in English and French can be found at the links below:

[EN letter](#)

[FR letter](#)