

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 164
December 2023

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What's In This Issue?

Hello and welcome to our December newsletter! This month, we are excited to share some updates and resources that we hope will be useful for you and your family. We understand that this can be a challenging time of year, with the holidays and winter weather adding additional stress and responsibilities, but we are here to support and empower you through it all.

In this issue, we will highlight some upcoming events and activities that you can participate in with your loved ones. Be sure to check out the Programs & Recreation section for a number of new opportunities.

We hope that this newsletter will provide you with valuable insights and resources. Happy holidays and best wishes for a peaceful and joyful 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***

The evening began with a labour update. Nothing has affected the Board locally so far.

SEAC then reviewed various policies of the Board. Some highlights of the policies reviewed included:

- It was recently mandated that all Board-based childcare centres need to be licensed.
- The importance of the concept of identity-affirming including those with disabilities, so they can be encouraged to be proud of who they are, too.
- If specific wording, or a specific concept was not included in one policy, it can probably be found in others. Therefore, policies need links and references to demonstrate consistency (for example: how bullying is defined).

Trustee Updates:

- At the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) Regional Council meeting on November 4, 2023, the Boards decided on items that needed advocacy and action. The items decided on were accessibility, transportation, and special education.

The next SEAC meeting will take place on December 13, 2023.

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Special Education Advisory Committee Update
Submitted by Erin Sutherland & Karen Applebee

School System Operational Business:

5.1. Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP) 2023-24 and Student Achievement Plan (SAP) was presented by J. Ritsma, Superintendent of Learning.

Three Pillars BIEP:

1. Curriculum and Achievement
2. Engagement, Pathways & Renewal
3. Faith and Well-Being

Three Priorities SAP:

1. Achievement of Learning Outcomes in Core Academics Skills
2. Preparation of Students for Future Success
3. Student Engagement & Well-Being

Trustee Updates:

WCDSB Board of Trustees October 23, 2023: <https://www.wcdsb.ca/2023/10/>

CADDAC Update:

Understanding the factors that impact adolescent students with Learning Disabilities
Assistive Technology Use in the classroom: Eligibility Survey

https://rotman.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e4X6cdVkq3lrYbk?Q_CHL=qr

WWDSS Update:

- The 2024 Awareness Calendar is now available for pre-order.
- Fall Mini conference was held Saturday, Nov 4, presentations included were: My Amazing Life & Experience with Special Olympics Advocate - Allie Libertini, Early Detection of Alzheimer's disease - Melanie Campbell, PhD, Professor, University of Waterloo, Otolaryngologic or ear, nose, and throat (ENT) problems common in children with Down syndrome (DS) - Dr. Sharon Cushing, MD, MSc, FRCSC, Otology/Audiology Pediatric Otolaryngology, ENT

What My Exceptionality Teaches Me About Social Justice

By Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator

I have always considered myself “privileged,” even before I knew what the word meant. As a teenager and young adult, I might have used the word “lucky” but in the context of privilege, I now find that word horrifying. Who am I to say that my life – while wonderful – is better than anyone else’s? I know that there are things I have that others wish for, but I also know that there are beautiful things that others have that I do not. I won’t make either list here, because I know that even the lists are based on only my perspective, and it is not right for me to assume that my list would match someone else’s.

There is one characteristic of my life that I would like to express my gratefulness for here, though, and that is my disability. Why? Well, so many reasons! I could talk about my rich life, filled with friends with and without exceptionalities. I could talk about the lump in my throat when someone on the Special Education Advisory Committee ([find out more about that here](#)) pointed out that encouraging students to take pride in their disabilities should be written into Board Policy. Today though, I am grateful for what my exceptionality teaches me about social justice.

You see, one of the problems with being a privileged white woman is that you can tend to wonder why people are bothered by things that to you see as small, like the words people use in a conversation that some might find hurtful. When that happens, I have the good fortune of being able to “translate” the moment in my head to something related to exceptionality. One example would be when people automatically refer to adults with exceptionalities as “kids.” *No big deal!* thinks the person. *You know that I know that they are not a “kid.”* Okay, but do you?

Do you know that people with exceptionalities know a lot more than you give us credit for? I am guilty of underestimating my friends with disabilities all the time. I HATE IT. Do you know that given the right information explained in the right way, we can make our own decisions? Do you know that sometimes we love to make our own mistakes, and this will lead to us making better decisions in the future? Ask me about wearing sweatpants in 30-degree heat. Best/worst day ever. And finally, do you know how word choice perpetuates the stereotype that people with disabilities will never be true adults? Word choice matters.

But this writing piece isn’t really about calling out the “kid” word choice. It’s about calling MYSELF out for the hurtful, damaging words I might use, and to express appreciation for being allowed to identify with such a beautiful, diverse group of people who are so often marginalized so that I can learn to use my privilege to lift people up and not to harm them. I will never not be grateful. I hope to use this gift well every day of my life.

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.

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 winter. Meetings do not require an appointment, but are on a first-come, first-served basis.

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Dec 5	Early ON Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am
Dec 6	EarlyON Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
Dec 12	EarlyON Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am
Dec 13	EarlyON St. Boniface 225 Starlight Ave, Breslau	10-11 am



Contact Erin -

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

*More dates to come
in the new year!*



www.wrfn.info



Erin will also be at EarlyON | Riverside on Thursday December 7 from 10-11:30 am to make up for a cancellation that happened in November.

Virtual Camp Fair 2024

Discover summer camp opportunities for children and youth with special needs.

In collaboration with Waterloo Region Family Network (WRFN) and Supporting Kids in Camp (SKIC), KidsAbility is hosting Virtual Camp Fair 2024. This series of fairs will feature camps from Waterloo Region, Guelph-Wellington, and beyond, providing programming and supports for campers with special needs. Attendees can explore various camp options, gather information, and directly address their questions to the camp representatives.

Overnight Camps

Waterloo Region, Guelph-Wellington, and Beyond

Tuesday, January 9

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Day Camps for Children

Aged 4-12 (Guelph-Wellington)

Wednesday, January 10

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Day Camps for Children

Aged 4-12 (Waterloo Region)

Monday, January 15

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Teens and Young Adults

Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington

Monday, February 5

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Click the links or register at:
kidsability.ca/camp-info

To learn more contact
rectherapy@kidsability.ca
or 1-888-372-2259

**No cost
to attend!**

We're excited to
see you there!



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Monday, February 5 - 7 - 9 pm



You're invited to join the next A New Chapter meeting on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 7:30 pm on Zoom.

Our topic to start the new year is the Vulnerable Person's Registry (VPR) and our guest will be Sue Simpson, Executive Director of the Waterloo Region Family Network. Sue will be accompanied by a representative from Waterloo Region Police Services.

The VPR is set up to protect our loved ones if they are involved with the Police in any way (example: as a missing person, in an emergency or due to a crime related event).

The website (www.vulnerablepersonsregistry.ca) describes the Registry as follows: *This voluntary registry will provide the Police Services with emergency contact information, detailed physical descriptions, known routines and special needs of this individual. This information will assist officers in communicating with, attending a residence of, or dealing with an emergency involving this individual.*

Bring your questions about the VPR and assessing the vulnerability of our loved ones to this important meeting.

Register by emailing maryjpike@hotmail.com.

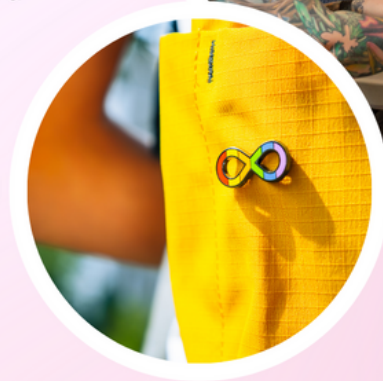
Spectrum on the Spectrum



A Social Group for queer and trans people in the autistic community!

Waterloo Region Family Network and Spectrum present Spectrum on the Spectrum, a monthly drop-in group for queer and trans people in the autistic community who are 18+ in Waterloo Region. This is an opportunity to gather and enjoy activities including board games, crafts, colouring, and discussion in an accepting and welcoming space. Games and materials will be provided, but participants are welcome to bring in their own activity/art supplies if they would like.

**Join us on the 4th Thursday
of every month!**



OUR EVENT CALENDARS

**SPECTRUM
210-283 DUKE ST W
KITCHENER, ON
N2H 3X7**

For more information,
please contact:

**info@wrfn.info or
info@ourspectrum.com**



Empowering Parents: A Journey of Hope and Support After a Child's Diagnosis

A family's journey through life is never straightforward, and this is especially true for families navigating an exceptionality. The long road of support can be full of obstacles, detours, and unexpected twists and turns!

This year, we'd like to highlight this family journey by sharing John's story. When John's child received a diagnosis, he and his family reached out to WRFN for guidance and support. He was introduced to Erin Sutherland, a Family Resource Coach, and his family's journey with WRFN began.

"Erin's caring and welcoming personality, in addition to her empathetic approach reduced our anxiety and fear of unknowns. She helped us understand the next steps to take including funding options, common issues, and approximate timelines for waitlists."

Erin told John and his family about available programs, therapies and services offered in our community. After meeting with Erin, John's family felt confident in the steps they needed to take, and things felt much more manageable.

"We are thankful to Erin for providing us with great advice and recommendations. As a result, we qualified for funding and were able to get the required services in place which greatly assisted our child's development and transition into school."

Fast forward a few years...John is now giving back as a WRFN volunteer Parent Mentor and Board member.

"I am honoured to be able to give back to a wonderful organization that provides great support and benefits to a diverse community."

John's journey would not be possible without our donors. When you support WRFN, you play an important role in the family journey. You help us ensure that even more families can find us and get connected to a growing network of support in Waterloo Region.

This holiday season, your donations have double the impact! Make a donation today to make a positive impact for exceptional families in your neighbourhood.



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. They will be taking a break in December and resume again in January. 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. Coffee Club has also started meeting in-person two Mondays each month from 7 to 9 pm.

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.

P4P - Planning and Facilitation Collaborative

The **Planning and Facilitation Collaborative (PFC)** has gone live! The PFC is a space where professionals and aspiring professionals can gather together to share knowledge and experiences, while also continuing to develop their skills and expertise through a series of online courses on planning and facilitation.

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>

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.

- 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.
- 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.

Fun Fearless Females

Fun Fearless Females offers a variety of supportive services and social events and programs that create a welcoming environment for all women to have fun, try new things (be fearless) and connect with other women. Check out the events calendar to see all the festive and creative events happening this December!

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

EarlyON Grandparents Connect

This program brings together a compassionate community ready to provide grandparents with the knowledge, resources, and emotional support needed if they are the legal guardians or primary caregivers for their grandchildren. Weekly meetings include childminding, snacks, and the opportunity to increase your circle of support. December meetings will occur on December 7, 14, and 21 from 10-11:30 am at EarlyON | Oak Creek (80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener). Email capc@caminowellbeing.ca to register.

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

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.keeptyourheadup.ca/mindful-moments.

Youth Exploring Possibilities (YEP)

YEP Social from KW Habilitation, is a social group for those aged 13-21. This December, they have a couple of holiday-themed classes for you or your loved one to try!

Winter Wonderland Baking | Tuesday, December 12 from 6 – 8 pm

- Out and About Classroom, 99 Ottawa St South
- Join YEP Social for a fun-filled night of yummy baking! We will be making sugar cookies and other holiday treats while we sing along to Christmas carols.

Christmas Creations | Tuesday, December 19 from 6 – 8 pm

- Out and About Classroom, 99 Ottawa St South
- Come along with YEP Social to create some festive Holiday crafts and decorations!

Register at: [Youth Exploring Possibilities – KW Habilitation Shop](#).

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 fashioned mail. They mail letters, postcards, colouring sheets, activity sheets, stickers and other fun goodies!

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

City of Cambridge

The City of Cambridge has two 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.

Skills Corner Adult Day Centre

A new program for young adults, located in Kitchener-Waterloo at Forest Hill United Church (121 Westmount Rd E). Have fun, learn new skills, socialize and grow. Register by calling 519-589-4022. Team includes Dinorah Romas, PSW and Registered EA and Child Youth Worker. Dinorah has 10+ years of experience working with special needs adults and kids on the spectrum. Georgina Radu has 20+ years of experience in the field, both professionally and personally. She is a registered EA.

Cheer Ability

Cheer Ability's Sand Shark team gives athletes of all ages and abilities a safe and fun environment to learn cheer, grow and make friends. They even take our routines to the performance stage. The program includes: 1 practice per week on Sunday 9-10 am at Cheer Sports Gym (401 New Dundee Rd, Kitchener), a practice T-shirt, a uniform with a hair bow, and 3-4 performances per season. The season runs from September (after labour day) until the end of April. Cheer Ability is always looking to grow their family! If you or someone you know may be interested, please connect at info@cheersportsharks.com or call 519-653-1221.

www.cheersportsharks.com.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

MoveMeant For All

Inclusive fitness training for all individuals with special needs, mental health, trauma and more. Contact Courtney Hughes at 519-503-4489 or move.meantforall@gmail.com.

Join the Smart Waterloo Region Nurture Youth Group

This is a youth group for those who like to connect with plants, and who are curious about learning ecological design and food forest planning. Join the SWRIL Nurture Youth Group! We meet Wednesday evenings from 5-7 pm at Communitech and Steckle Heritage Farm. We will be meeting weekly to:

- do fun hands-on activities like seed sprouting, kombucha brewing, apple pressing, etc.
- explore regenerative design concepts.
- learn about nature, the land, and our relationships to our traditional and local foods.
- train our creative problem-solving skills through IDEATION and innovation sessions!
- enjoy movies and hear from inspiring food-systems folks, locally and abroad.

Email Nikola at nbarsoum@regionofwaterloo.ca or register at [Join the Nurture Youth Group! \(google.com\)](https://www.google.com).

Region-wide tutoring information

Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health provides tutoring and homework spaces that are accessible and free of cost to families and students. For more information, visit www.caminowellbeing.ca/tutoring.

Artshine Workshops

Join Karis Disability Services Waterloo & Guelph and Lifeshare for Artshine this January! Art workshops take place on Wednesdays from 6 – 7 pm. The curriculum includes: folk art owls, new years eve fireworks, jeweled butterflies, abstract leaf patterns, and a bonus project. Each participant will receive their own art kit. The cost of all 4 workshops is \$75 plus HST and shipping. To register, contact Katie Weir at kweir@christian-horizons.org by December 8.

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 December virtual group program calendar for Children and Youth and Young Adults! <https://www.recrepite.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, please visit <https://ow.ly/Oe0150Ppj84>.

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.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

KidsAbility Behaviour Support Services

KidsAbility has provided quality Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) services in Waterloo/Wellington for over 20 years. At KidsAbility, you can find the following range of behavioural supports: One-to-one ABA programs, social skills group, March Break ABA camp, caregiver coaching and workshops, Shake'n'Bake Cooking group, resource navigation, and caregiver support groups. For more information, please book a free consultation at GPS@kidsability.ca or call 519-886-8886 ext. 2242.

March of Dimes

Paving the Path: Beginning my Journey to the World of Work

Has a disability or other barrier prevented you from imagining yourself in the workforce? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have a job? Do you want to learn about the types of jobs that best suit your personality? Would you like to know how working would affect the benefits you currently receive? If you answered yes to any of the questions above, Paving the Path for Work can help. This 6-week program offered by March of Dimes Canada is for people who have had limited exposure to employment but want to learn more. Offered virtually and in person. For more information or to register for an upcoming session, please contact: Steven Hendry at 519-501-9868 or email shendry@marchofdimes.ca.

Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)

[Centre for Mental Health Research and Treatment at the University of Waterloo](#) is gearing up to offer Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) for parents of young children this winter. The parenting group costs \$200 + \$30 workbook for the 8-week program; however fee subsidies are available as needed. The group will run on Wednesday evenings from 6 to 7:30 pm, beginning January 17, 2024 and finishing March 7, 2024. Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) is an evidence-based 8-week group intervention that offers parents simple and practical parenting skills and strategies. Interested parents are invited to complete the [PPP Intake Information Form](#). A short telephone intake screen will be scheduled to discuss the program and determine whether it is a good fit for their family. For more information about the CMHRT, please visit our website <https://uwaterloo.ca/mental-health-research-treatment//>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

HCARDD Mindfulness Programs

Mindfulness for Family Caregivers of people with disabilities, those who are aging, and those experiencing a challenging illness

Every Monday, January 15 to February 26, 2024, from 1 - 2 pm (NOTE: No session Feb 19). [Register here.](#)

Mindfulness for Leaders and Management Professionals in Health, Home Care, and Disability Support Services

Every Thursday, January 25 to February 29, 2024, from 1 to 1:45 pm.
[Register here.](#)

Mindfulness for Frontline Professionals in Health, Home Care, and Disability Support Services

Every Thursday, January 25 to February 29, 2024, from 6:30-7:30 pm Eastern.
[Register here.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops, Training & Events

ECHO Ontario Adult Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Pop-Up

ECHO Ontario is hosting an Adult Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Pop-Up on Dementia & Intellectual Disability on Friday, December 8, 2023, from 9:30 to 11 am.

[Register Here](#)

Bridges to Belonging Future Planning Series

Insurance and Tax Planning with Paul Arsenault, Kindred Credit Union

Join Bridges to Belonging on January 25, 2024 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm for a conversation on Disability Tax credit, Disability support deduction, the taxation of trusts, insurance planning and funding estate trusts (including Henson Trust), and overview of the RDSP with Paul Arsenault from Kindred Credit Union.

<https://bit.ly/taxandinsurance2024>

Wills and Estates, Trusts and Henson Trusts, Powers of Attorney with David Amy GGFI Law

On March 21, 2024 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm, Bridges to Belonging will host a virtual information session on wills and estates, trusts and Henson Trusts, and powers of attorney.

<https://bit.ly/willstrustspoa2024>

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/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CYPT Belonging Expo Keynote

Did you miss the keynote discussion at the Belonging Expo? Or maybe you want to re-watch the discussion about the importance of belonging? The recording of the conversation is now available on YouTube! Watch Oluseun Olayinka, Dr. Dillon Browne, and Youth Connector Kian discuss children & youth belonging from a grassroots and academic perspective.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzV9Jwbjyaw>

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](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>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Plexus

Plexus is a 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](#)

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.

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>

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

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>.

EarlyON Mobile Sites

In addition to our Centres, EarlyON offers mobile drop in at various sites in Waterloo Region. Join other children, caring adults and families in play and exploration together! EarlyON Educators are available to provide support and information around early learning topics, community resources, programs and referrals in our play based environment.

To learn more about our mobile sites, call 519-741-8585 x3001 or visit our [Locations Page](#).

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>

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/>

Pearson Airport

Pearson Airport has partnered with Autism Ontario and Magnusmode (creator of the Magnus Cards app) to create an activity book to help prepare for travel. The airport also has sunflower lanyards that can be requested to signify the presence of an invisible disability. There are 20 different Magnus Card decks (on phone app) to help navigate aspects of travel. For more Pearson Airport neurodiversity support options, please visit: [Travel tools for autism and other diverse needs | Pearson Airport \(torontopearson.com\)](https://www.torontopearson.com/travel-tools-for-autism-and-other-diverse-needs)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

HCARDD Updated Website

Explore the newly revamped H-CARDD website to learn how the team has been working together with scientists, clinicians, service providers, policymakers, and people with developmental disabilities to improve the health and health care of adults with developmental disabilities. Here is what you will find on our website:

- [Projects](#) - Get an overview of H-CARDD's projects, including our latest report, [Supporting Alternate Level of Care Patients with a Dual Diagnosis to Transition from Hospital to Home: Practice Guidance](#)
- [Health Care Resources](#) - Access a wealth of resources tailored for health care professionals, family caregivers, and adults with developmental disabilities
- [Knowledge Exchange](#) - Explore easy-to-read summaries, snapshots, reports, newsletters, podcasts, and videos.
- [H-CARDD Blog Posts](#) - Dive into our archive of blog posts spanning from 2014 to the present.

Practice Guidance for ALC Patients

Adults with developmental disabilities who also have a psychiatric condition, often referred to as a dual diagnosis, face a significantly higher risk of becoming Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients. These individuals no longer require hospital-level care but remain hospitalized due to a lack of suitable community settings. In this report, the H-CARDD team presents a comprehensive set of principles and core components designed to guide and support the successful transition of ALC patients with a dual diagnosis from hospitals to community settings in Ontario. Download our full report and summaries:

[Full Report](#) - [Summary](#) - [French Summary](#) - [Easy Read Version](#)

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. [Join the next Waterloo PCMH meeting on December 20 at 7 pm.](#)

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 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 second and fourth Tuesday of each month from 7 – 8:30 pm via Zoom. There will be guest speakers, resource sharing, support and mentorship opportunities for attendees. Contact: For more details or to register, please contact bpsgroup2020@gmail.com.

South Asian Wellness Group

The South Asian Wellness Group is a drop-in group every Thursday from 6 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. 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!

Virtual Peer Support for Newly Diagnosed Autistic Women

Researchers are evaluating the impact of participating in a [virtual peer support program](#) on the well-being of newly diagnosed autistic women. Who can participate? Adults 18 years or older who identify as a woman, have received a formal diagnosis of autism in the last 8 months, and live in Ontario. [See flyer for additional details](#). Questions? Contact Princess Owusu at AWPeerSupport@camh.ca.

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, 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

ADHD Support Groups - Adult ADHD and Parent Support Groups

CADDAC is excited to announce that our ADHD Support groups for both Adult and Parents are now back in session! In addition, we are excited to introduce a new Western Time zone Parent Support Group. You do not need to join the group of the time zone you're in. You can join whichever regional meeting that fits in your schedule. [Learn more and register!](#)

Street Therapy

Street Therapy is a fee-for-service psychotherapy clinic located at 177 Victoria St. N in Kitchener. Street Therapy will be offering a monthly ADHD support group starting January of 2024. The group will take place virtually on the first Saturday of every month throughout the year. Their goal is to help provide the local ADHD community a safe space to connect with like-minded individuals and encourage access to a neuro-inclusive community. Please see the following link for details.

<https://www.streettherapy.ca/groups/>

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 depositions 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

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/>

Autism & Mental Health Services – Focus Group Participants Needed

The Counselling Collaborative of Waterloo Region (CCWR) is a collective of five nonprofit counselling agencies that together are aiming to improve the quality and integration of mental health services for Autistic Youth & their families. Looking to hear from:

- Autistic Youth
- Caregivers of Autistic Youth & Children
- Mental Health Professionals (Social Workers, Psychotherapists)
- Allied Health Professionals (Behaviour Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists)

The aim of the focus groups is to hear about your experiences accessing and navigating supports as caregivers, autistic youth, and health professionals. Your voices will help to shape how we provide neurodivergent mental health services and work with community partners in the future.

Please email Kelly.reitzel@woolwichcounselling.org to participate.

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.

Perinatal Mental Health Survey

Are you a parent/guardian of a child born in or after 2018, or are you currently expecting a child? Do you live in the Waterloo region? The Research Shop and Perinatal Mental Health Alliance in the Region of Waterloo want to hear from you. Share your experiences in talking about mental health with medical health professionals by [answering this short survey](#).

WRDSB

The WRDSB is building a public education system where every student can experience success - but, they can't do it alone! These three new engagement plans will allow them to better hear from the students, families and community members they serve: <https://wrdsb.social/468vSsf>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Counselling Collaborative Waterloo Region

Counselling Collaborative Waterloo Region is seeking focus group participants to offer input into the development of our Ontario Autism Program Innovation Grant to support a region-wide approach to mental health services for autistic children, youth and their families.

Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre Research Study: Clinical trial of nabilone for severe behavioural problems (aggression) in adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities

The aim of the study is to improve the well-being of adults with developmental disabilities and distressing behaviours through the use of Nabilone medication. Open to adults with a developmental disability, difficulty managing anxiety or frustration, 25 years of age and older.

For more information and to enroll:

Phone: 416-535-8501 ext. 32817

Email: n-and@camh.ca or hsiang-yuan.lin@camh.ca

EarlyOn Early Years Assessment Survey

The **Early Years Needs Assessment Survey** is for parents and caregivers in the Regional Municipality of Waterloo who have children ages 6 and under (or who are expecting a child). The quick survey includes questions about personal and family characteristics, current and anticipated early years and childcare needs, and current early years experiences.

This quick survey is designed to get a pulse on families' needs so we are hoping to hear from parents and caregivers who are currently attending Early Years programs and services including EarlyON, and those who are not attending.

The survey responses will be used to continue to adjust EarlyON programs and create new services to find the best way to support families with children under age 6 in our Region.

[Fill out the Early Years Needs Assessment today!](#)

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

Disability Without Poverty – Help Shape the CDB!

Disability Without Poverty is launching a cross-Canada project focused on outlining the priorities, values, and recommendations of people with disabilities, especially those living in or near poverty, to shape the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB). This will help policy makers and government officials understand the needs and perspectives of this population and be sure the CDB reflects those needs. The project is taking place in three phases:

- An online questionnaire focused on values and priorities.
- Guided peer-to-peer conversations.
- A second online process focused on the details, so we can test what we learned.

They will share an interim report and a final report on their website, with stakeholders and with government. If you are a person with a disability OR the caregiver or family member of a disabled person who needs assistance to participate: Access the online questionnaire and learn more about the project at <https://www.disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/take-action/shape-the-cdb>. Head over there to share your thoughts and perspectives!

If you are interested in going deeper, you can volunteer to join Disability Without Poverty's peer-to-peer conversations, the second phase of the engagement which will be taking place in December. To sign up to volunteer please share your email address by following [this link](#).

If you have any questions you can email shapecdb@disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca, call (833) 537-1822 or text 833-947-1153.

Queens U Study – Caregiver Stigma Experiences

This study aims to better understand the impact that stigma can have on caregivers of autistic children. This study involves five questionnaires which will take about 45-60 minutes for you to complete. Looking for primary caregivers of autistic children to participate. Must be fluent in English. Please email asd@queensu.ca to participate.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Holiday Closures

EarlyON December Closures

All EarlyON | Waterloo Region locations will be closed on Friday, December 8 for Professional Learning. All locations will also be closed from Saturday, December 23 to Tuesday, January 2 so our team can enjoy time with their families.

Recreational Respite December Closures

Recreational Respite will be closing our offices from: December 15, 2023 - January 8, 2024. Customers we support: if this is an URGENT matter, please email info@recrespite.com and mark in the subject line: URGENT and we will respond as soon as possible.

Be sure to check in with your regular service providers to be aware of their office closures over the holidays. Waterloo Region Family Network will be available by phone or email from December 27 - 29. Our physical office space will reopen again on January 2 after the holidays. Our offices will be closed December 25, 26, and January 1.