

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 159
July 2023

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What's In This Issue?

It's officially summer vacation for our kiddos! We hope you have some fun summer plans and/or travels ahead of you. It sounds like we're in for a hot summer in Waterloo Region, so please stay safe and hydrated on our warmer days!

While reading through this issue of Family Pulse, you might notice some of our programs are taking a break over the summer, but that doesn't mean there aren't great opportunities to get out and about this summer!

Take a peek to see all the great summer programs, events, engagement opportunities, and more.



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***

At the last SEAC meeting, there was discussion of the successes for this year, and how grant money allowed the Board to keep the appropriate number of Educational Assistants and Child and Youth Workers. The Board did their best to make sure they did not have to close congregated classes. There were remarks that the budget pressure was not affecting congregated classrooms or needed staff members. The Right to Read program is also continuing with the help of grant money.

Lynette Eulette, the Board's Psychology Lead, is retiring. The person who fills the position will be the lead for both the psychologists and social workers. If the person is a social worker, they will provide clinical supervision for the social workers and another qualified person will do so for psychologists. If the Lead hired is a psychologist, then they will supervise the psychologists, and another qualified person will supervise the social workers.

The School Year has been approved and is now available on the WRDSB website. Please note that the 2023-2024 school year begins on Wednesday, September 6, 2023.

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

Bill C-22 Update

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

In a historic moment on June 20, Bill C-22 was passed in Senate and is now onto the final step to becoming ratified! It is expected to receive Royal Assent soon.

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

What I Know This July First

Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator

The other day, I asked two friends what they were doing for Canada Day. When they said, "Nothing really," I quickly amended, "I meant the long weekend, not Canada Day, specifically," which was mostly true.

I don't really know what to do with my Canadian pride these days. It feels almost tainted by how we have treated Indigenous people in the past and how we still treat them today.

At the same time, when I see a piece of Canadian art or listen to Canadian music, I feel the familiar spark of pride in my chest that says, "This beauty is from OUR country. I am so proud that it is ours."

How do I reconcile both of those things? As wise people are showing me every day, maybe I *don't* reconcile them. Beauty and tragedy, cruelty and joy can exist side by side. I can be proud of Canadians while realizing that the story behind *why* we are Canadians is rooted in colonization and white supremacy.

Both things are true, and this July 1, that is what I know.

What's Happening at WRFN

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



A NEW CHAPTER

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

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

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



June 4, 2023
In-person Walk in Huron Natural Area

There will be two route options available to participants:

20 minutes on flatter ground
35 minutes on gently sloping terrain

After our walk, we'll sit together and have a chance to connect in person about the things that are important to us as parents and caregivers.

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.

A New Chapter has planned a walk in Huron Natural Area, Kitchener for their July Meeting. There will be a shorter (20 minutes on flatter ground) and a longer (35 minutes on gently sloping terrain) version of the walk. The path is partially paved and well groomed.

After the walk, there will be a chance to sit and connect in person about the things that are important to us as parents and caregivers.

Please RSVP as usual to maryjpike@hotmail.com. When you respond, please let her know if you are considering the shorter or longer version of the hike.

When: Tuesday, July 4, 7:30 -9 pm

Where: Meet at the picnic shelter which is right beside the parking lot at Huron Natural Area.

Who: Parents/Caregivers only, please.

What to wear/bring:

- comfortable walking shoes and clothing - dress for the weather,
- a bottle of water,
- a thermos with something to sip during our chat,
- chairs are not necessary but if you are more comfortable in your own chair, please bring one.

NOTE: If the weather is very rainy or sweltering heat, we will modify our plan and move on to Zoom for those who would still like to meet. We will make a decision about this and send out an email by 6 pm that evening if there will be modifications.



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

The discount code for Waterloo Region Family Network is EPWRFN25

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

Some Key Accessibility points about THEMUSEUM:

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

What's Happening at WRFN

Ask A Self-Advocate

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

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

Parent Mentor Program

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

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

School-Issue Parent Support Group

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

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

Family Resource Coach

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

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

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

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

Coffee Club

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

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

Programs & Recreation

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre

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

Shore Centre – Pride and Joy

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

KW Habilitation Register for YEP (Youth Exploring Possibilities)

YEP Registration is open! Join this summer to explore Waterloo Region and everything it has to offer. Using the GRT as the primary mode of transportation, YEP will explore community resources, and social, recreational and leisure activities. Opportunity to participate in work readiness learning will help to learn those important skills for home, school and work life. There is a little something for everyone. Join YEP for a summer of fun! YEP is not a summer camp.

Learn more: <http://ow.ly/zau350OAR41>

Register: <http://ow.ly/bAp850OARfp>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Power of Trades

YMCA of Three Rivers is accepting applications for the Power of Trades program beginning July 4. This program is supported by Immigrant Services located at the Chaplin Family YMCA, 250 Hespeler Rd, Cambridge. Power of Trades is a pre-employment workplace preparation program for individuals interested in skilled trades. Participants receive information and practical advice about finding and keeping a job in the skilled trades in Ontario. There is no cost to participate. For more information please contact newcomers@ytr.ymca.ca or call 226-448-0637.

Hope for Families Counselling Centre

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

Fun Fearless Females

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

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

CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings

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

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

Cambridge Food Bank

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Let's Talk

KW Multicultural Centre's Let's Talk is a free program that provides career guidance to newcomer youth ages 14-21. The summer session will be a condensed, week-long version of programming running from July 10 - 14 at the Clemens Mill Idea Exchange (1-5 pm daily). Registration is now available for youth through this link: <https://forms.gle/MvoMF1Sky4H6r9ix5>

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.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Bridges to Belonging

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

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

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

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

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

City of Kitchener

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

Keep Your Head Up Foundation

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

YWCA Canada – The Next Accelerator

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

ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections

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

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

Community of Hearts Summer Break

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

City of Cambridge

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Recreational Respite

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

Sensory Workout

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

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

March of Dimes Connect & Share

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

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

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops, Training & Events

Let's Talk About It: Discussions About Trauma Through Film

Together with their partner Black Health Alliance, [Kind Mind Family Wellness](#) is hosting a unique film and discussion event on July 8 from 2 – 4 pm at the Kitchener Public Library (85 Queen St N) designed exclusively for Black youth. It promises to be an afternoon filled with inspiration, thought-provoking ideas, and meaningful conversations. Call 226-336-1998 to register.

Community of Hearts Open House

Please join Community of Hearts on July 13 from 4 -6pm for a Summer Open House: Planting the Seeds for Independent Success! Come learn the story of Community of Hearts, mingle with friends, have some refreshments and enjoy a performance by the Glee Club at the Lifelong Learning Centre (55 Wyndham Street North in the Old Quebec Street Mall)!

[Book your free e-ticket now.](#)

Choice, Connection and Community Workshop

Are you an older adult 55+ looking for a unique summer experience? Join Bridges to Belonging's Choice, Connection and Community. Meet other seniors in a small group setting to explore, discuss and create a personal plan to stay active and connected as you age with dignity, safety, security and belonging in your community. This FREE workshop series runs Thursdays between June 29 to July 20 from 1 to 3 pm at 91 Moore Avenue in Kitchener.

[Register here.](#)

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

Partners for Planning

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

[Housing Workshop Form Link](#)

CADDAC Conference

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

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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 or email jdigirolamo@ccrw.org

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

March of Dimes Hi, Tech!

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Plexus

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

National Advisory Council on Poverty

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

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

Positive Behaviour Supports Corporation (PBS Corp.)

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

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

Family Support Network for Employment

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

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

Rainbow Community Calendar

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Ontario Caregiver Association

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

Family Compass Waterloo Region

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

Fostering Information from Family & Children Services

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Partners for Planning

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

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

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>.

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 the fastest-growing developers of new supportive affordable housing in Ontario. Looking for housing? Visit <https://indwell.ca>

Imagine Canada

Imagine Canada has a ton of great resources and information on non-profit and charity sector-related policy in their newsletter, The Early Alert.

<https://bit.ly/3IH2kQg>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Qualia Counselling Services

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

<https://qualiacounselling.com/training/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Support Groups

Parents for Children's Mental Health (PCMH)

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

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

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

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

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario

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

Province-Wide Monthly Virtual Groups for Adults with FASD

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

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

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

South Asian Wellness Group

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

The A-Team of Waterloo Region

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CIA - Connecting, Interests and Activities

CIA is a group in Waterloo Region for adults (18+) with Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) level 1. The purpose of the group is to create a safe and supportive space for people to have fun, meet and connect with others, and take part in activities. Join if you're looking for a positive place of belonging! Meetings take place at the Downtown Community Centre (35 B Weber Street West), in the Multi-Purpose Room. This is a drop-in group, so folks are welcome to join anytime between 5 and 7 pm. If you have any questions, please reach out to Kelly Groh at 519-731-3923.

Virtual Support Group for Adolescents with FASD

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

Contact Rob for more information rmacdonald@lutherwood.ca.

CADDAC Support Groups

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

Vulnerable Persons Alert - Support Bill 74

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

https://www.moniquetaylormpp.ca/vulnerable_persons_alert

Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada

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

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

By joining this council you will:

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

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

Infant & Child Studies Group at University of Waterloo

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Laurier University

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

Health Nexus: The Confidence Project

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

SickKids – Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion

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

Community Living Ontario

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Community News

Bridges to Belonging Announces ABIDE

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