

*Where exceptional families thrive*

**Issue 158**

**June 2023**

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## What's In This Issue?

We love the month of June! The weather is getting nicer, the sun is shining longer, and the Waterloo Region community is celebrating Pride! It's also Indigenous History Month, Men's Health Awareness Month, and Father's Day is right around the corner.

And of course, our kids will be eagerly anticipating the last days of school. Overall, the energy of June is palpable with so much to celebrate. We hope you're able to enjoy the excitement of this month!

If you're looking for programs and events to try in June, look no further than this issue of Family Pulse. And be sure to visit our website for a calendar of all our upcoming events and other ongoing updates from our partners.



**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***

Esther Wainaina, Human Rights Officer, gave a presentation regarding the WRDSB's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. She talked about how the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) Plan and the Human Rights Code work together to ensure equality and accessibility. The AODA and the Human Rights Code ensure the rights of many marginalized groups, including those with disabilities, are honoured.

There was discussion of all the standards and how implementation is progressing. In terms of the Communication and Information Standard, the Board is doing its best to improve content and accessibility of the website (the accessibility piece is taking some time due to difficulty with acquiring software). They are also developing training and resources for staff that are accessible and providing resources for staff to create accessible content. They are also creating accessible student records for those who request them and responding to feedback from users and community members.

As for the Employment Standard, the Board is improving the diversity and inclusivity of its workforce. They are continuing to learn about accommodations for the hiring process and during employment, and how to hire people without bias. They are also working on the Emergency Evacuation Plan.

In terms of the Physical Environment Standard, the Board is consistently working to make all schools physically accessible, and keeping the community updated while doing so. They are also working to make sure they understand students' needs in advance. A standard is also being developed for vision and hearing related upgrades to schools.

For Transportation standards, the Board will continue to design and monitor services. They will make sure that all policies align with principles of equity and inclusion and address access and inclusion barriers students may experience. They will also comply with all necessary policies.

For the Customer Service Standards, the Board will make sure the staff understands their roles when it comes to providing Customer Service. They will formalize the review process for everything that guides the WRDSB to ensure that it abides with Code and AODA requirements. They will also formalize the process of engaging stakeholder feedback, including the fact that the AODA Working Group will engage with stakeholder groups.

The Board also seeks to address systemic issues by developing policies, procedures, and guidelines to support the accessibility plan, creating professional development on the duty to accommodate people with disabilities, and developing learning for students on inclusive communities. They will also develop a complaints procedure based on the Human Rights policy and the Code. They will prioritize the AODA and accessibility work.

All aspects of these Standards are at various stages of implementation.

The calendar for the next school year will come out soon.

**The next SEAC meeting will take place on June 14, 2023.**

## SEAC Updates

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

The Special Education Budget for 2023/24 was the main topic of discussion at the latest SEAC meeting. There was a budget presentation from R. King, Manager of Budget and Financial Reporting. They went through a budget overview, grant announcements, special education funding and special education expenditures.

Following the presentation was a Q&A period. Suggestions were shared regarding an increased need for Special Education teachers and Speech and Language Pathologists. There was a desire for more collaboration between Program Services and Special Education.

The Community and ACTIVE Living Survey was also discussed. The survey is for parents of students that graduated from the program. Surveys will be distributed to parents in the near future.

Ministry updates were provided, including a letter to the Minister of Education from Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) on the impact of Covid-19 on the students SEAC represents.

Individual agency updates were provided.

For Trustees updates please see here: <https://www.wcdsb.ca/wcdsb-board-meeting-bulletin-may-2023/>

**The next SEAC meeting will take place on June 7.**

# Remembering Trustee Fred Meissner

**Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator**

When I read the email that let me know that Trustee Fred Meissner had passed away, my breath caught. I was surprised at the stab of grief I felt for this man I had met twice on a screen.

But then, as people were sharing memories of him during SEAC I realized something: from the instant Trustee Meisner had spoken at SEAC, I knew he was a kindred spirit. Why? Because he was doing one of my favourite things: giving his job 110% and having fun at the exact same time. I could sense his joy right away, his love for students, his love for the Board, it poured out of him. I remember thinking: Oh, this is going to be a blast!

I hope that I am remembered similarly for combining work and play, for knowing that a person can give their all with sparkling eyes and a grin. Trustee Meissner, I wish we'd gotten to do that at the same table for a bit, but I can't wait to keep doing it with some of the people whose lives you've touched, because clearly there were many.

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

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
June 6	Early ON   Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am
June 7	EarlyON   Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
June 9	EarlyON   Cedar Creek 55 Hilltop Dr, Ayr, ON	10-11:30 am
June 13	EarlyON   Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am
June 14	EarlyON   St. Boniface 225 Starlight Ave, Breslau	10-11 am



### Contact Erin -

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

**More dates to come!**



[www.wrfn.info](http://www.wrfn.info)





# HOUSING FORUM

***Presentations By:***

Developmental Services Ontario &  
Region of Waterloo Affordable Housing

 **1 PM & 6 PM**

 **JUNE 20**

 DoubleTree by Hilton  
30 Fairway Rd S, Kitchener

**Register Now!**

## WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN...

 **YOU'RE AN...**  
*adult with a developmental disability who needs/will be needing supportive and affordable housing or a caregiver of a loved one with a developmental disability.*

 **LOOKING FOR OPTIONS**  
*exploring Affordable Housing & Developmental Service Supports for adults with disabilities in Waterloo Region.*

 **NAVIGATING TWO SYSTEMS**  
*Learn more about the two housing systems available to you: Developmental Services (Ontario) and Affordable Housing (region).*

 **YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS**  
*There will be a dedicated question period after each presentation and a chance to visit various info booths before and after!*

[Link to afternoon session registration.](#)

[Link to evening session registration.](#)





**Thursdays from 3 – 5 pm**  
**KidsAbility, Waterloo**  
**(500 Hallmark Drive, Waterloo)**

As special needs families, life is constantly changing but together we can help each other see that it remains beautiful.

**Come play, connect, support and be supported  
as we bring our differences together.**

Kaleidoscope Kids is a free drop-in program. There is no age limit, and you are encouraged to bring your children with special needs, siblings or come by yourself.

**No registration required.**

If you have any questions, please reach out to [info@wrfn.info](mailto:info@wrfn.info)

**A partnership program of:**



KidsAbility is mask-friendly environment. Masks are no longer mandatory in our facilities.



## 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 6, 2023**  
**All About WRFN**

*Presentations from Leah Bowman, Family Resource Coach, and Cristina Stanger, Self-Advocacy Liaison.*

Did you know that A New Chapter is only one of many programs offered by Waterloo Region Family Network? At this month's ANC meeting, we will learn all about the many ways WRFN supports families and individuals with exceptionalities, through all ages and stages.

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 [maryjpik@hotmai.com](mailto:maryjpik@hotmai.com) and ask to be put on our email list.*

Did you know that A New Chapter is only one of many programs offered by Waterloo Region Family Network?

Join us for our A New Chapter Meeting on Tuesday, June 6, where we will learn all about the many ways Waterloo Region Family Network supports families and individuals with exceptionalities, through all ages and stages.

Leah Bowman, Family Resource Coach focused on ages 16-99, will talk about her role and the many other programs WRFN offers.

Cristina Stanger will share more on the Ask-A-Self-Advocate program. Cristina was diagnosed with exceptionalities as an adult, and she is passionate about sharing her lived experience.

Afterwards, from 9-9:30, you're welcome to stay online for the Ask Us Anything portion of the meeting where we benefit from each other's knowledge and experience (and WRFN's, too). Email Mary at [maryjpik@hotmai.com](mailto:maryjpik@hotmai.com) to register and get the Zoom link.



A banner for the Youth Impact Survey. The top half features a white background with large, colorful paint splashes in magenta, orange, and blue. The bottom half is a solid blue rectangle containing white text and logos.

# Youth Impact Survey

Helps inform decisions about programs, services,  
and supports available to young people in our  
community.



Children and Youth  
Planning Table  
of Waterloo Region

[www.youthimpactsurvey.ca](http://www.youthimpactsurvey.ca)

The Youth Impact Survey is BACK! If you're between 9 and 18 from Waterloo Region, we want to hear from YOU.

What you have to say will make a difference! Data from past survey results was used for grant proposals, program planning and strategic planning. Organizations have also used the data to have deeper, more focused conversations with young people to better understand their lived experience and the issues they face in their everyday lives.

WRFN is hopeful to see lots of children and youth with exceptionalities participate, too! If you are a parent or caregiver of children of a youth with exceptionalities, we'd be so grateful if you could let them know about the survey and encourage their participation.

**NEW DEADLINE: Friday, June 9**

[Complete the Survey.](http://www.youthimpactsurvey.ca)



In the spring, Waterloo Region Family Network welcomed Oula Almadhoun to the team as our new Fund Development Officer. She will lead all of our fundraising initiatives, including grant writing and event planning. We're so glad to have Oula on board!

Oula worked for several years as an academic support and grants writer for non profit and government organizations in both the US and Canada. She has also organized and implemented educational programs for marginalized communities. She is highly committed to fostering a sense of community and inclusiveness. She is thrilled to join the WRFN team and play a role in making a meaningful difference.

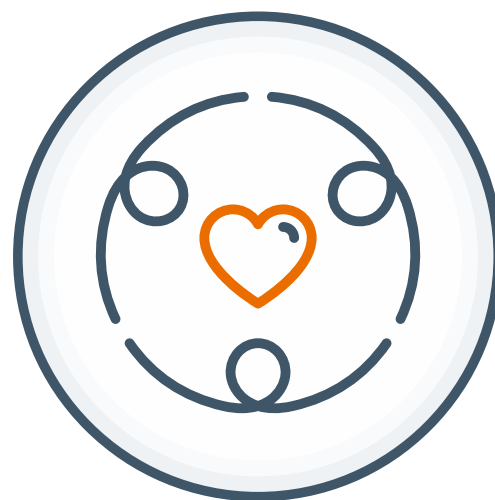
## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Update

WRFN has been partnering with Prime Target Consulting to create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) framework, led by Ayo Owodunni.

In January, we launched the Assessment Phase of our framework with a survey which was distributed to staff, board members, other volunteers, the Friends of WRFN group, and to families and self-advocates. We thank those who were able to send us their feedback!

Now that the data has been collected from our stakeholders, we're currently bringing our findings and learnings together to develop our implementation and embedding strategy.

More updates will be available soon.





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](mailto: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. The next regular meeting will take place June 28. 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](mailto: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](mailto:Erin.Sutherland@wrfn.info).

Call Leah Bowman at 226-898-9301 or email [Leah.Bowman@wrfn.info](mailto:Leah.Bowman@wrfn.info).

Call Marla Pender at 226-338-7274 or email [Marla.Pender@wrfn.info](mailto: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](mailto: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

### **LEG Up! Thursday Youth Social**

Join LEG Up! at KW Habilitation (for ages 14 - 21) from 6 -8 pm.

- June 15 - Let's Paint

Bullas Hall, KWH 99, Ottawa St.S

<https://shop.kwhab.ca/product-category/leg-up/leg-up-youth/>

### **Rainbow Drop In**

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

- Saturday June 24, 2023 9 -11 am

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

### **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](mailto:vtonicic@cambridgefoodbank.org) 519-622-6550 x109.

## 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!](#)

### Youth Job Connection Summer Program

Cambridge Career Connections is now recruiting for the Youth Job Connection Summer Program. This program is for students 15-18 who are currently registered in school and will be returning to school in the upcoming semester! We are looking for youth who are living in Cambridge and are interested in finding part-time or summer employment. Connect with the resource room (519-622-0815 ext 223) to complete the eligibility screening form with staff.

### 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](mailto:support@lifecourseonline.com).

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### Recreational Respite

#### ***Virtual Services***

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

#### ***Respite Services***

Recreational Respite professionals work one to one with children, youth, adults and older adults who have a disability, mental health, or face social isolation. Those we support may face barriers to participation, struggle with social relationships, connectivity, that effect opportunities for participation. Targeted goals are for positive mental health, emotional wellness, social health and connectivity.

Cost: \$36.50 - \$38.50/hour

**Summer 2023: Offering one-to-one respite support at summer camps and community recreation programs.**

<https://www.recrespite.com/respite-support>

### 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

### 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](http://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](http://ywcacambridge.ca) or email [s.hohenadel@ywcacambridge.ca](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:blanchardj@cambridge.ca).



# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Workshops, Training & Events

### **Sunbeam - Understanding the Tax System & Protecting Yourself from Scams**

Join Sunbeam on Wednesday, June 7, from 7 to 8 pm for a special presentation for youth 15 to 25 years old. Speakers from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will present on protecting yourself from scams, and provide information on MyAccount, forms for your first job, free tax clinics, payroll deductions, and other tax issues. For more information, call 519-741-1121 ext. 2201 or email:

r.khanam@sunbeamcommunity.ca.

<https://www.sdrc.ca/events/understanding-the-tax-system-protecting-yourself-from-scams-virtual-speaker-series/>

### **Sawubona – Summer Picnic in the Park!**

On Sunday, June 11, Sawubona is hosting a free event for Black caregivers of a loved one with a disability. Join Sawubona from 2:30 – 6 pm at Centennial Park, 256 Centennial Park Road, Etobicoke (picnic site #8). What to expect: Fun activities for adults and children; Food will be provided but if you would like to bring your own special dish to share, please bring, and no obligation; Fellowship, resource sharing and community building.

Register at <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/black-parentcaregiver-summer-event-2023-tickets-632985686227>

### **Microboards Ontario**

On June 14, at 6:30 pm, join Microboards Ontario for an opportunity for individuals, families and friends who have, or are thinking about creating a microboard to connect, share and learn from other families who have incorporated a microboard for their family member. Hear from two families at different points of the journey - one with a microboard for their family member and one in the midst of creating one and why they chose a microboard, challenges, the impact and sense of security it provides. There will be lots of opportunity to ask questions and connect.

For more details about this service contact: karen@microboardsontario.com

<https://v2.mycommunityhub.ca/#/program-details/23311>

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **The Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre at CAMH**

What Now? A discussion about health and mental health after 3 pandemic years. Join the Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre on Thursday June 15, 12 -1:30 pm for an interactive conversation with a psychiatrist, an occupational therapist and a family physician facilitated by family caregivers. Health care providers will answer your health/mental health related questions. This presentation is for family caregivers of adults with autism and other conditions.

How to Submit Your Question: Email your question(s) about supporting the health/mental health of your loved one to: [hcardd@camh.ca](mailto:hcardd@camh.ca) . Submit questions by June 9.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/what-now-a-discussion-about-health-mental-health-after-3-pandemic-years-tickets-643291511227>

### **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](mailto:info@woolwichcounselling.org).

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

### **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/>

### **Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario - Have Your Say**

On Tuesday, June 13 at 1:30 pm, join the IFCO to talk about the *Now Is the Time* paper. Have Your Say is a virtual gathering for people living with an intellectual/developmental disability and their communication support, allies & families. This event will be facilitated by Kory Earle, an active, respected member, and co-chair of the IFCO Leadership Group. He is also the Past President of People First of Canada.

Register at: <http://ow.ly/Nkza50OCbVg>

# 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](http://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](mailto: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: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](http://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](http://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](http://www.breakawaypassportservices.com), [breakawaypassport@gmail.com](mailto: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

## 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. The next Waterloo PCMH [regular support group meeting](#) will take place June 27. The next [ADHD support group](#) will take place June 21. Find your closest child and youth mental health centre here:

<https://www.family.cmho.org/>

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

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

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

### 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://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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 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](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](mailto: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.

## 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](mailto:info@bridgestobelonging.ca).