

*Where exceptional families thrive*

**Issue 155**  
**March 2023**

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## What's In This Issue?

March is an exciting time of the year (hopefully with Spring right around the corner) and we want to take this opportunity to thank you for signing up for our newsletters! Family Pulse has largely been shaped over the years by your feedback. We are glad to hear when our newsletter is working for your unique needs.

This month, please have a look at our Kaleidoscope Kids flyer. We've added an important reminder about inclement weather and where to check if the weather is bad on one of our drop-in dates. We also encourage you to join us once again at Evening of Elegance! Tickets are now on sale, with early bird prices ending March 14, so don't wait.

We're proud to provide resources and support to help your children reach their full potential. Thank you again for your ongoing dedication to your children's growth and development. Here's to a great month ahead!



**Support WRFN**

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

# SEAC Updates

## Special Education Advisory Council Overview

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is a group of enthusiastic advocates representing associations and organizations that support students with exceptional needs. Its role is to review and make recommendations to the Board about Special Education programs and services for students with exceptional needs. There is a SEAC meeting held each month for both the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB).

### Guiding Principles:

- All students are valued and are contributing members to their school community and individual school experience.
- Strong relationships between school, students, parents/guardians and extended school communities where everyone feels engaged and supported.
- Programming and curriculum delivery uses Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction and a Holistic Approach to maximize opportunities and meet the needs of all students.
- Students and staff achieve success working in an innovative learning environment.
- Creating a sustainable culture of inclusion, respect, understanding and collaboration.

WRDSB Trustees: Marie Snyder & Fred Meissner

WCDSB Trustees: Bob Sikora & Sally Fuentes

WRFN has representation on both WCDSB and WRDSB SEAC. Carmen Sutherland, our Coffee Club Coordinator, represents WRFN families at WRDSB SEAC. Erin Sutherland, Family Resource Coach, represents WRFN families on the WCDSB SEAC and Karen Applebee, a WRFN volunteer, is the alternate representative for the WCDSB SEAC. We encourage you to reach out to representatives with any concerns or experiences to share.

Carmen can be reached at [carmen.sutherland@wrfn.info](mailto:carmen.sutherland@wrfn.info) and Erin can be reached at [erin.sutherland@wrfn.info](mailto:erin.sutherland@wrfn.info).

## SEAC Updates

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

The first item that was discussed at SEAC was a transportation update. Those responsible for transportation are continuing to make adjustments and prioritizing Special Education students. Families with Special Education students have also been informed.

There was also discussion about class closures of congregated classrooms on a day-by-day basis. If this happens, it is usually due to shortages of Educational Assistants (EAs). There is a process for how this is dealt with. The schools are asked to have a contingency plan for how to deal with EAs that are absent. If this plan is not working, then the school may reach out to principals who will work with the superintendents for Family of Schools. Depending on how this is resolved, this issue may be communicated up the hierarchy of superintendents and other staff (for example: Stephen McRae, the System Administrator will help with this). If a class closure is needed, the Board will try to rotate them so that no two classes are closed two days in a row.

Stephen McRae, the System Administrator also discussed the transition to secondary school. He discussed a new planning system for students called My Blueprint, which will help students have an easier time planning their academic journey. It was noted that, for special education students, their teams would primarily handle the planning.

In terms of transition for students in ACE classes, there was discussion of who is there to support multi-language learners and which schools have teachers to support those students. There was also discussion of Fast Forward classes and how what the schedule looks like and how many classes are available may vary depending on the number of students enrolled. Other aspects of transition were also discussed including information nights for parents of students in grade eight. For Special Education students specifically, principals would meet with the student and team, high school teachers may go visit students at feeder schools to get information from the previous school.

Finally, there was discussion of how to promote inclusion for students in ACE classes. Some ideas were to have students audit a class, and to match students in ACE classes with those with similar abilities, then they can push each other to learn.

The Student Support process was reiterated. There was a discussion of how the Board is trying to reduce the number of congregated classes as schools gain more knowledge and technology. In terms of the Independent Study course that is closing, this class was for students with anxiety, and there are fewer applicants, perhaps because the supports that the Board have put in place are enough for many.

Finally, there was discussion about remote learning in the future. The point was made that it is beneficial for some students but there need to be parameters around it to ensure learning is taking place.

**The next SEAC meeting will take place on March 8, 2023.**

## SEAC Updates

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

The group met on Wednesday February 1 at the Catholic Education Centre with some members also joining virtually.

Assistive Technology Resource Teacher, Ms. Mazan gave an overview of the Assistive Technology program within the board:

- SEA Funding is Special Equipment Amount for technology for students with special needs.
- Guiding Principle is the Universal Design for Learning: Gives students equal opportunities to succeed.
- Initiated by student's educational and psychological assessment Special Education Teacher/SLP/Vision Itinerant submits the request for SEA equipment
- Provides Software that supports students with reading & writing, utilize iPads, Boardmaker, accessible coding, etc.
- Members tried the accessible coding equipment. (CUBELETS)

Member updates were provided. Trustee Updates were provided. Please see here for details: [\*\*WCDSB Board Meeting Bulletin – January 2023 – Waterloo Catholic District School Board\*\*](#)

**The next meeting will take place March 1, 2023.**



## A World Where Only Beauty Matters

**By Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator**

I was listening to a podcast this morning that pointed out how embedded it is in our culture that we are meant to look a certain way: namely, as thin and unblemished as possible. I am also reading a book wherein a doctor tells a Deaf family that their newborn sons are also Deaf, and they are proud and pleased instead of upset as the doctor expected.

I'm not going to link either of these pieces of media. The podcast might be triggering for some people, and I have only just started the book. Between these things and World Down Syndrome Day coming up on March 21, I've been starting to think about what "normal" is.

These days, the next thought in my brain after considering this is that being different from the "norm" is not "bad" and many aspects of being different are only harder because society is not set up for difference. We are not set up to support (or be joyful about) disability, gender or cultural differences, differences in how we experience or express feelings, differences in how we see divinity, and the list goes on.

Maybe the best thing to do is dance in our colourful socks on March 21 (by the way, when someone told me that the socks are meant to represent Down syndrome's extra chromosomes a couple of years ago, my brain just about exploded with joy), and then after we dance, we keep doing the work of making the world we actually want, the one where "normal" doesn't even matter, only beauty does.

# What's Happening at WRFN

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

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

## WRFN Drop-Ins at EarlyON

### Meet with Erin, our Family Resource Coach

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

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Mar 7	Early ON   Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am
Mar 8	EarlyON   Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
Mar 10	EarlyON   Riverside 250 William St., Elmira	10-11:30 am
Mar 21	EarlyON   Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am
Mar 22	EarlyON   St. Boniface 225 Starlight Ave, Breslau	10-11 am



### Contact Erin -

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

**More dates to come in April!**



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





Join us on Friday, April 14 at Waterloo Region Family Network's eighth Annual Signature Fundraising event, Evening of Elegance. Enjoy an elegant evening of mixing and mingling while tasting delicious wine and beer - all paired with appetizing food selections.

Our evening will also include live music and a spectacular silent auction, that will include exciting items for you to bid on. Doors open at 6:45pm.

All proceeds go directly to providing resources and facilitating meaningful connections, in all life stages, for families of children with exceptional needs, both with and without a diagnosis.

Don't miss out on your chance to purchase Early Bird tickets at a discounted rate from now until March 14.

**[Buy Your Tickets Here Now!](#)**



Are you looking for the right summer camp program for your loved one? This year KidsAbility, Waterloo Region Family Network and Supporting Kids In Camp (SKIC) partnered to host a series of virtual camp fairs. We are now starting to update our website with links to view the presentations that took place in January and February.

You can also access these links here:

- Watch the **2023 [Overnight Camp Fair](#)** video
- Watch the **2023 [Day Camps Fair for Children in Waterloo](#)** video
- Watch the **2023 [Day Camps Fair for Children in Guelph/Wellington](#)** video
- Watch the **2023 [Camps for Teens & Adults](#)** Fair video
- 

KidsAbility also hosted Summer Camp Planning workshops to help families plan a successful summer camp experience for children with exceptionalities.

- Watch the **2023 [Cambridge Summer Camp Planning Workshop](#)** video
- Watch the **2023 [Kitchener Waterloo Summer Camp Planning Workshop](#)** video
- Watch the **2023 [Guelph-Wellington Summer Camp Planning Workshop](#)** video



**Kaleidoscope  
Kids**

**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:**



Per site requirements, all adults and children (as tolerated) are asked to wear a mask on entry and during the program. Thank you for your understanding.

While we are heading into March and hopeful for better weather, we've noticed that there's been a bit of a pattern of bad weather affecting our Thursday drop ins. While we haven't had to fully cancel too many times, we want to remind parents and caregivers to always check our social media channels before heading out in inclement weather, or check our **[Community News & Updates](#)** page on our website. We will post any program cancellations here!





## 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.



### March 7, 2023 *Insights for Expanding Choice and Aging Your Way*

Sue Lantz is an experienced planner who will offer some ideas about how we as parents and caregivers can best plan and prepare for our senior years.

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](mailto:maryjpike@hotmail.com) and ask to be put on our email list.*

Join us for our next A New Chapter meeting on March 7 at 7:30 pm. Our guest will be Sue Lantz. Sue will speak about ***Insights for Expanding Choice and Aging Your Way***.

Sue is an experienced planner who will offer some ideas about how we, as parents and caregivers, can best plan and prepare for our senior years. To learn more about Sue and her work, check out her website: <https://collaborativeaging.com/>


If you would like to attend this online meeting, please rsvp to [maryjpike@hotmail.com](mailto:maryjpike@hotmail.com). a Zoom link will be shared closer to the date.

Afterwards, you can stay on the Zoom call to ask questions on any topic during our Ask Us Anything segment from 9-9:30pm.




**ASE**  
Acknowledging the Sibling Experience

ASE was created to bring siblings of individuals who are neurodiverse together. During the 7-week program, we will explore concepts and techniques that will help you to better understand your sibling, while also completing activities that will support your individuality.



**Group 1**  
Grades 9 - 12



**Group 2**  
Grades 5 - 8

**When: Wednesdays**


Group 1	Group 2
Grades 9-12 March 22nd - May 3rd 4:30-6:30pm	Grades 5-8 May 10th - June 21st 6:00-8:00pm

**Where: Downtown Community Centre**  
35 Weber St W, Kitchener

**Cost: FREE**





Siblings are invited to come and connect with other siblings and explore the ASE curriculum, over food and drinks.

REGISTER



SCAN ME

In Participation With:

Holly Kane - holly.kane@oakbridge.ca

ASE is a new program being offered from Oak Bridge Academy, in partnership with Unity for Autism, City of Kitchener, and Waterloo Region Family Network. The program was created to bring siblings of individuals who are neurodiverse together. In the program, siblings will learn concepts and techniques to better understand their siblings while also doing activities that celebrate their own individuality.

There will be two groups. Group 1 is for teens in grades 9 - 12 and will run from March 22 until May 3 from 4:30 - 6:30 pm. Group 2 is for children and youth in grades 5 - 8 and will run from May 10 until June 21 from 6 - 8 pm.

There is no cost to join. Both groups will meet at the Downtown Community Centre (33 Weber St W, Kitchener).

Email Holly Kane at holly.kane@oakbridge.ca for more information.

# 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 March 29. 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 3:00-4:00 PM. Generally, we are just catching up and chatting, mixed with a little bit of watching YouTube.

If you would like to join us, please send me an email at [Carmen.sutherland@wrfn.info](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.

#### Monica Place

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

#### Infant Massage

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

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **LEG Up! March Break 2023 Youth Activities at KW Habilitation**

- *Table Top Game Olympics*

Monday, March 13, 1 – 3 pm

KWH 99 Ottawa St S, Kitchener

Join your friends at LEG Up! To play games and have fun on your March Break.

Snacks and drinks will be provided.

- *Let's Paint*

Wednesday, March 15, 10 am -12 pm

KWH 99 Ottawa St S, Kitchener

Let's get creative and paint a canvas with your instructor and step by step instructions.

- *Celebrate St. Patrick's Day*

Friday, March 17, 10 am - 12 pm

KWH 99 Ottawa St S, Kitchener

Come paint a clay pot Leprechaun hat, and listen & dance to traditional Irish music with your friends.

**[Register here.](#)**

### **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 March 25, 2023 9 -11 am
- Saturday April 29, 2023 9 -11 am
- Saturday May 27, 2023 9 -11 am
- Saturday June 24, 2023 9 -11 am

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

### **Fun Fearless Females**

Join Fun Fearless Females this March for a ton of fresh and fun activities during Girls Nights. Activities include a Plant Wellness DIY Body Products session, making vision boards, a BINGO night and cupcake social! Don't miss out ladies. Check out the calendar at: **<https://www.funfearlessfemales.ca/events>**

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Siblings Canada: Savvy Siblings**

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

### **KW Habilitation**

There's a ton of great KW Habilitation activities available including ArtShine, Glee with Katie, Drumming with Sam, Creative Music with Len, Music with Katie, and other activities coming up in February. To see a full calendar of events, visit <https://shop.kwhab.ca/calendar/>. To register, please visit <https://shop.kwhab.ca/>.

### **Cambridge Career Connections - Youth Job Connection**

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

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

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

### **Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region: Virtual Open Space**

Looking to connect to folks on a weekly basis?

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

Email Kim Sproul for more details at [kim.sproul@eafwr.on.ca](mailto:kim.sproul@eafwr.on.ca)

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Artshine Virtual Accessible Art For Kids, Teens & Adults**

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

### **Recreational Respite Virtual Services**

Virtual group programs have been developed in partnership with participants to address a variety of interests, skill practice, goals and outcomes that promote inclusion, encourage community participation and nurture social connectivity. Visit the website for the February virtual group program calendar for Children and Youth and Young Adults!

<https://www.recrespite.com/virtual-services/>

### **Sensory Workout**

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

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

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

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

### **Return of the Dragon**

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### Bridges to Belonging

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

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

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

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

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

**Choice, Connection, and Community:** a series of four in-person workshops and 15 hours of individualized facilitation for seniors to discover ways to express their gifts and apply their strengths in personal areas of interest and passion. Participants create a personalized plan for social connection, community participation and experience belonging to age well in a place of their choosing AND start implementing their plan with their facilitator serving as a personal guide, resource and encourager. If you are interested in participating in a future session of Choice, Connection, and Community, please email Sam at [spanchaud@bridgestobelonging.ca](mailto:spanchaud@bridgestobelonging.ca).

### 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

### ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections

Friendly Connections is focused on helping its community and individuals of all ages with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, overcome isolation.

It aims to help improve the well-being of individuals through socializing and providing entertaining resources. Friendly Connections wants to connect with individuals across Canada through phone calls, video calls, emailing, messenger chats and good old fashion mail. They mail letters, postcards, colouring sheets, activity sheets, stickers and other fun goodies!

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

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

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

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

### Carizon

[Carizon's](#) Winter group programs and workshops are here. [Click here](#) to view the flyer. This list includes all groups and workshops available across Carizon in both Community Services and Clinical departments. To register for any groups or workshops, email [groups@carizon.ca](mailto:groups@carizon.ca) or call 519-743-6333 ext. 3250.

### 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: [vtoncic@cambridgefoodbank.org](mailto:vtoncic@cambridgefoodbank.org) 519-622-6550 x109.

### Project Read

[Get Set Learn](#) is a fun, free program for families with children 0-4 years of age. It helps children get ready for school while parents learn and practice skills to support their children. Parents also learn skills that can help with their future goals. Registration for the Get Set Learn winter program is open now. The program is being offered online on Tuesdays and Thursdays. To sign up, email [info@projectread.ca](mailto:info@projectread.ca) or phone 519-570-3054.

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Stepping Stones Expressive Arts Intuitive Painting Sessions**

Stepping Stones' Intuitive Painting groups are now running on Friday afternoons with a few available spots left! This group runs until February 24 from 1 - 2:30 pm. Sessions are \$25/person. You may purchase an art kit for \$30 should you need supplies. If Friday afternoons don't work for you, the next series of Intuitive painting sessions start at the beginning of March and will run on Thursday evenings from 7 - 8:30 pm. You may register for all 6 of these sessions for \$125 (which means you get one session free) or you can do individual sessions for \$25/person. Email [steppingstonesarts@gmail.com](mailto:steppingstonesarts@gmail.com) to register.

### **CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings**

Whether it's children and youth groups, employment workshops, tech sessions or book clubs, CNIB's innovative programs are designed to educate, entertain and engage! CNIB's free programs are available to Canadians who are blind or partially sighted as well as their families, friends and caregivers. Visit their website to learn more: <https://bit.ly/38cRE1o>

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Workshops, Training & Events

### Lutherwood Work Access and Safety Training

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

### Woolwich Counselling

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

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

### Parenting Now Winter Schedule

Parenting Now has released its [Winter Schedule of Parenting Supports](#). This series of one-hour positive parenting “snap shots” will get you thinking about your choices as a parent and help you develop strategies for a more connected and cooperative household. Each session stands alone. You can attend just one or all of them. To register for programs or to get more information, email: [parenting@kwcounselling.com](mailto:parenting@kwcounselling.com)

### Development Services Ontario

*Bricks and Mortar: Exploring Home Ownership Options*

Join DSO Housing Navigators on March 16 at 10 am for ‘Exploring Home Ownership Options’, a free virtual presentation on various types of home ownership options and resources. [Register here.](#)

*Exploring Affordable Rental Options*

On March 23 at 1 pm, DSO Housing Navigators will be hosting a free virtual presentation on various types of affordable rent geared to income options available to individuals with low to moderate income. [Register here.](#)



## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Microboards Ontario Family Forum: Learning Together**

On March 4 from 10 am – 4 pm, join Microboards Ontario for a day-long event for connecting, learning and building community. Opening keynote speaker is Peter Marks from A Centre For Conscious Care. Learn about Circles of Support, Managing Finance with Brian Cutler, hear about The Heart of the Matter with Carolyn Fast, join an 'Ask Me Anything' panel, and get a Journey to Belonging update. Registration is open until the day before the event.

<https://v2.mycommunityhub.ca/#/program-details/21499>

### **Accessible Céilí**

March 11, 2023 – 3:30-5:00pm

Button Factory Arts, 25 Regina St S, Waterloo, ON N2J 1R8, Canada

The IRL (Irish Real Life) Festival and Kaleidoscope Irish Dance Studio are pleased to host an accessible céilí, a social dance event designed specifically to accommodate dancers of all abilities. They will use traditional Irish music, but with slower tempos, and traditional Irish dance steps, but with modifications to make the dances more accessible. Our céilí caller is Marjorie Hopkins. She has been teaching Irish dance for over a decade and specializes in inclusive and adaptive Irish dance.

This event is for families to dance together and share in the joy that is Irish dance. It will also feature a short performance by Kaleidoscope Studio's Rhythm n' Reels adaptive Irish dancers. Dance is for everybody and the IRL Festival extends this invitation to all who long to dance!

For more information or to purchase tickets: [IRL Festival Accessible Ceili](#)

### **FrameWorks Institute and the American Academy of Pediatrics**

Save the date for FrameWorks' presentation on Wednesday, March 15 from 12 - 1 pm, Framing Conversations about childhood vaccination. Join for a deeper explanation of the research and what it means for how we communicate. To learn more about this topic more generally, please visit [FrameWorks' website](#).

### **WRCSB - Beyond Graduation 2023**

The time to plan for your loved one with a disability is now. Join WRCSB for an evening of connecting with community supports and agencies in our Waterloo Region to help support your child's transition from high school to adult life. There will be two sessions. The first will be held April 19 from 6:30 - 7:30 pm at Resurrection Catholic High School. The next will be April 20 from 6:30 - 7:30 pm at St. Benedict Catholic High School. Please RSVP by April 1 at [WCDSB Beyond Graduation 2023](#).

# 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:jdigiolamo@ccrw.org)  
<https://www.ccrw.org/>

### March of Dimes Hi, Tech!

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Plexus**

Plexus is a 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.

# 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 March 28. The next **ADHD support group** will take place March 18. Find your closest child and youth mental health centre here:

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

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

The Waterloo Wellington Perth Chapter of PFLAG invites you to attend our support group focusing on topics of interest to parents, family and friends of LGBTQ individuals. PFLAG Canada is Canada's only national organization that helps all Canadians with issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. More info at: <https://www.facebook.com/PFLAG.WWP/>

### Preemie Parents of Waterloo-Wellington

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

Visit: <https://www.cpbfbfbpc.org/covid19>

### Province-Wide Monthly Virtual Groups for Adults with FASD

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

### **The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario**

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

### **Strong Moms, Safe Kids**

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

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

### **Virtual Support Group for Adolescents with FASD**

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

Contact Rob for more information [rmacdonald@lutherwood.ca](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. Sign up for our last meetings of 2022! [Programs and Events - CADDAC](#)

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Engagement Opportunities

### Queens University Research

#### *Participate in Online Emotional Research*

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

### Volunteers Needed for Study on Covid-19 Stigma

Are you of East Asian or Southeast Asian descent between the ages of 16-19? Did you contract Covid-19 during the pandemic? You may be eligible to participate in a study to explore your experiences. Participation involves completing an online demographic form, answering interview questions about your lived experiences from a researcher. Everything is done virtually OR in-person at York University and the interview will take about an hour to complete. To participate, please contact Nasteho Hasan at 647-575-2891 or email [nhasan28@yorku.ca](mailto:nhasan28@yorku.ca).

### University of Calgary

#### *Exploring the Mental Health Benefits of Participating in Physical Activity Study*

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **York Parenting Project Study**

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

### **York University**

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

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

### **Time Poverty Study**

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

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

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

## 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).

### Independent Living Waterloo Region

Please join Independent Living Waterloo Region for a Canada Disability Benefit Q&A. This is a hybrid in-person and remote opportunity with the in-person option happening at KW AccessAbility 659 King St E #250, Kitchener on Wednesday, March 1 from 1 – 2 pm. MP Morrice will be there to field any questions from members of public and to also hear any suggestions on how to make this program work most effectively for the community.

### 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

### Partners 4 Planning

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

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

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

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Community News

### **Bridges to Belonging Announces ABIDE**

Bridges to Belonging is pleased to announce a new initiative called ABIDE (Ability, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity & Equity) as one more step toward the realization of its vision of a community where people of all abilities live free of barriers to inclusion and are connected through meaningful relationships.

ABIDE aims to build capacity for equity seeking ethnocultural grassroots organizations, communities and religious groups, families, and individuals to access programs, services, and community resources to improve the quality of life.

A Community Connections & Capacity Building Facilitator will provide learning sessions and resources about accessibility and inclusion and the rights for people with disabilities in Canada; funding and financial programs and services such as ODSP, SSAH & Passport Funding, RDSPs, and the Disability Tax Credit; and share best practices and tools for facilitating person-directed planning and supported independence for people with diverse identities including a disability.

Bridges to Belonging is grateful for the funding support provided by the Waterloo Region Community Foundation.

### **ODSP Update**

As of February 1, the Ontario government increased the monthly earnings exemption for people on ODSP from \$200 to \$1,000 per month. Individuals on the program who get more than that amount would keep 25 cents on the dollar. Prior to this change, payments were reduced by 50 cents for each dollar earned after \$200.

For more information, please go to this link: [Working and earning on the Ontario Disability Support Program | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/en/working-and-earning-on-the-ontario-disability-support-program)

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### Update from Inclusion Canada

#### ***New Federal Benefit - One-time Housing Top-Up Benefit***

For many people in Canada, it is increasingly challenging to find safe and affordable housing. The Government's new one-time top up to the Canada Housing Benefit aims to help low-income renters with a one-time tax-free payment of \$500. You may be eligible if you:

- were born on or before December 1, 2007
- have a family net income for 2021 of \$35,000 or less for families, or \$20,000 or less for individuals
- are resident of Canada for tax purposes in 2022 and principal residence is situated in Canada on December 1, 2022
- paid at least 30 per cent of family net income, based on their 2021 income tax return, on rent in the 2022 calendar year for principal residence in Canada

**Note: applications are open until Friday, March 31, 2023.**

[Click here](#) for more information and to find out if you might be eligible.

#### ***Bill C-22***

In a unanimous vote by Members of Parliament, Bill C-22: The Canada Disability Benefit (CDB), moves past Third Reading and onto the Senate!

#### **What comes next?**

Now that the bill has passed through the House of Commons it will go through the same process in Canada's Senate. We hope that the Senate will see the unanimous support to date as evidence to not delay its final passage.

We will still need your help in appealing to Senators to prioritize the passage of this bill so it can quickly become law. This will allow the regulations to be drafted by government along with us to create the benefit and establish the guidelines. Government has committed to the disability community being actively at the table for this process.