

*Where exceptional families thrive*

**Issue 154**  
**February 2023**

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## What's In This Issue?

We couldn't be more excited about the line up of opportunities in this issue of Family Pulse. The team at WRFN is especially excited to announce the return of one of our favourite evenings of the year (you'll have to see page 7 to see what it is)!

February is another busy month at WRFN and in the community. Don't miss Erin's February EarlyON drop-ins and our last Virtual Camp Fair opportunity. And if you haven't joined us at Kaleidoscope Kids yet, check out our flyer on page 9 to see what it's all about!

There are also some key updates on the Canadian Disability Benefit and ODSP at the end of this issue, so be sure to have a look there, too. Wishing you a very happy February 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 topic that was discussed at SEAC was the Student Support process. Student support is the first thing discussed with the Classroom Team. If that support does not meet the needs of a student, then it is taken to the In-School Support Team or ISS. If needs are still not being met, the situation is then taken to the multidisciplinary team.

In terms of who is on the team, it differs between elementary students and secondary students. For the Classroom Team, this may include several different types of educators including a classroom teacher, an educational assistant (EA), or a teacher for Multi-Language Learners (MLL). For secondary students, this team includes the principal or vice-principal, the Special Education Department Head, and the Guidance Department Head. Other members may include social workers and student success teachers. The Multi-Disciplinary team in elementary school would include a principal or vice principal, school staff like the Special Education resource teacher, other knowledgeable adults like someone from psychological services, and may also include Child and Youth Workers and other staff members.

It was noted that the team in the classroom, the in-school support team, and the multi-disciplinary team all go through a similar process when supporting student success. They gather information, develop a plan (focusing on Universal Design, considering multi-language learners and other universal design practices), implement the plan and gather data about whether it is working. They then assess the data and reflect on whether the plan should continue or be adjusted.

All teams engage caregivers and families as much as possible, including letting them know where their child is within the process, and the next steps after each meeting. They know families know their child best and that they need to be included in every step in the process.

There was also a discussion of parents having knowledgeable people to support them in meetings so that they will be more comfortable to make their voice heard.

SEAC is also looking for interested parents to join the committee. Referrals are welcome, particularly if they identify with an intersectional identity and have overlapping experience with other organizations.

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

## SEAC Updates

### **Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Special Education Advisory Committee Update**

***Submitted Erin Sutherland & Karen Applebee***

This SEAC meeting started with an introduction of new members including:

- Bob Sikora - WCDSB Trustee
- Sally Fuentes - WCDSB Trustee
- Renee Kraft - WCDSB Trustee Alternate.

The group elected a new chair & co-chair: Motion to accept Laura Shoemaker and Cindy Benedetti as SEAC Co-Chairs effective February 1st, 2023. Member and association updates were provided.

Filomena Cruz, Community Transition Support Worker with the board, provided a high-level overview of her program and role.

Erin Lemak, Principal of Student Services provided a presentation on Project SEARCH, a partnership between WCDSB, KW Habilitation and St Mary's Hospital. Project SEARCH is a 10-month employment program for students with primary diagnosis of an intellectual or developmental disability who are in their final year of secondary school. Students reach their employment goals through real-life work experience (three internships immersed at St Mary's General Hospital), combined with training in employability and life skills and employment planning and support.

**The February SEAC meeting was held February 1, 2023. The March SEAC meeting will be held March 1, 2023.**



## Acts of Kindness

**By Cristina Stanger, Self-Advocacy Liaison**

I've written before in the Family Pulse newsletter about giving yourself grace which, in a lot of ways, means showing kindness to your own self. But let's explore the idea of kindness expressed toward others. You may or may not know that Friday, February 17, 2023, is Random Acts of Kindness Day. And while in a perfect world, every day would be Random Acts of Kindness Day, it's nice to have a day to remember to reach out to others.

I realise that 'random act of kindness' is an established societal phrase of sorts, but the word 'random' still strikes me as somewhat odd, because usually your act of kindness involves some intentional decision making. Perhaps it means that help is given when not explicitly requested — let's face it, asking for help can be hard — so the kind act may appear random to the one on the receiving end?

For the purposes of my own personal understanding, I am going to interpret 'random' as meaning 'unprompted'. So, whether you reach out to an old friend, leave a kind note for a family member, or offer to help a neighbour complete a task, it's nice to think outside of ourselves and do something nice for someone else.

And guess what? Not only are you brightening someone's day, you — as the kindness-giver — will also get a plus. It's been shown that doing kind things for others boosts your own mood and self-esteem. Sometimes I have trouble connecting with others and meeting new people, and I've discovered that small acts of kindness can help spark relationships, which can in turn help build community.

After three years of pandemic living, the majority of people are feeling strained, stressed, and burnt out. Putting a little extra kindness out into the world never hurts. Whether it is something small or big, I encourage you to do a kindness experiment by generating an unprompted act of kindness, then observe the positive ripple effect you create.

# 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
Feb 7	Early ON   Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am
Feb 8	EarlyON   Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
Feb 10	EarlyON   Cedar Creek 55 Hilltop Dr, Ayr, ON	10-11:30 am
Feb 14	EarlyON   Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am
Feb 15	EarlyON   St. Boniface 225 Starlight Ave, Breslau	10-11 am



### Contact Erin -

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

**More dates to come in March!**



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



*Evening of  
Elegance*

**SAVE THE DATE**

Join us for our Annual Signature Fundraising Event

<b>Friday</b>	<b>APRIL 14, 2023</b>
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**St. George Banquet Hall**  
665 King St. N., Waterloo

Tickets on sale soon!





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. Join us for our last session (Day Camp programs for teens and young adults) via Teams to learn about camp options and have your questions answered by the camp directors themselves! Registrants will receive a Teams link via email the morning of the event.

**Focus:** Day Camp programs for teens and young adults — Waterloo Region and Guelph Wellington

**Date:** Monday, February 13, 2023

**Time:** 7 – 8:30pm

**[Click Here for Registration](#)**

**Cost:** Free

**Who:** Everyone is welcome

**Registration Deadline:** 9 am morning of the workshop

**Questions? Contact:** Meg Shirley 519-886-8886 x 1302 or [mshirley@kidsability.ca](mailto:mshirley@kidsability.ca)

We will soon have links from each session to share with everyone who wasn't able to make it the night of our events, but are still interested in learning about summer camp options for their family members. Stay tuned!





**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.



## 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.



**February 7, 2023**

Laura MacGregor will share her learning about how families who have children with disabilities are welcomed, or not, in their faith communities.

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.*

We hope you'll join us for our next meeting on February 7 (7:30pm) when Laura MacGregor will share her learning about how families who have children with disabilities are welcomed, or not, in their faith communities.

Have you felt welcomed into your own faith community?  
Have you tried different faith settings in search of a welcoming community?  
What works for you?

Although this will be a discussion about inclusion in faith settings, the concerns and ideas will be transferable to many aspects of the community.

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

# What's Happening at WRFN

## Ask A Self-Advocate

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

For more information on Ask A Self-Advocate please contact Cristina Stanger at [Cristina.Stanger@wrfn.info](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 February 22. 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) or Andrea (andrear@monicaplace.ca) know.

#### **Infant Massage**

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

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



## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### LEG Up!

#### LEG Up! Earth Sciences

February 13 – March 13, Mondays 10 am – 12 pm at LEG Up! (109 Unit D, Ottawa St, Kitchener)

Discover the amazing world we live in and the surrounding environments!

#### LEG Up! Coffee and Games

February 24, March 3, 10, 17, Fridays 1 – 3 pm at LEG Up! (109 Unit D, Ottawa St, Kitchener)

Enjoy coffee and games with your friends on Friday afternoons.

### 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 February 25, 2023 9 -11 am
- 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

Fun Fearless Females has a ton of lovely events for the month of February. Celebrate the season with the gals at a Galentine's Night at DeBAR Dessert Café on February 10, have a virtual games night February 17, and join a movie night on February 24.

Email [lori@funfearlessfemales.ca](mailto:lori@funfearlessfemales.ca) to register. 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](#).

### March of Dimes Connect & Share

Wouldn't it be wonderful to visit with someone regularly who shares your interests? March of Dimes virtual Connect & Share program was designed to make that happen. You will be matched with a volunteer who shares your interests and your buddy will visit with you (as often as you like) – just for the fun of it.

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

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

### CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings

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

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections**

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

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

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

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

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

### **I AM!**

[Women's Crisis Services](#) will be back to [KDCHC](#) this February to facilitate their [I AM program](#) at KDCHC! This eight-week program is designed to teach youth about healthy relationships to help decrease violence in our community. It is a preventative program that uses self-esteem building activities to highlight the importance of having a positive personal self-image. To register, call Angela at 519-741-9184 x2005 or email [Angela.Stahlbaum@wccswr.org](mailto:Angela.Stahlbaum@wccswr.org).

### **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.

## 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.

### **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.

### **Community of Hearts**

**Community of Hearts** has a variety of in-person and virtual evening programs for anyone 16+ coming up this February. Join for Cooking: Dinner, Finances & Budgeting, Understanding Your Emotions, and Friendship & Dating. All Programs are Passport-Funding Friendly. Email your questions to [info@communityofhearts.ca](mailto:info@communityofhearts.ca) or call 519-826-9056.

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Workshops & Training

### Lutherwood Work Access and Safety Training

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

### Woolwich Counselling

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

### Early Planning Toolkit

Join the Planning Network on Wednesday, February 8 at 7 pm for Money Talks: Accessing Financial Resources for your Child with a Disability. Learn about financial resources and tax credits you can access from the Ontario and Canadian governments to help support your child throughout their life.

[\*\*Partners for Planning - Money Talks: Financial Planning -- Feb 8 \(planningnetwork.ca\)\*\*](#)

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Pathways to Growth – Tech 4 Success**

This month, join Pathways to Growth for this 6-week Digital Literacy Program for those with mild to moderate developmental disabilities 19+. Learn key concepts like computer hardware and software, keyboard and mouse skills, email and safety, Microsoft office suite, searching information online, and basic online safety. The course takes place every Friday from February 10 to March 17 from 10 am – 12 pm. Call Christina Halkias at 905-793-5400 x226 or email [chalkias@thelearningplace.ca](mailto:chalkias@thelearningplace.ca) for more information. [Register here.](#)

### **Developmental Services Ontario**

Join DSO Housing Navigators for [Exploring Affordable Rental Options](#), a free virtual presentation on February 15 from 1 – 2 pm about various types of affordable and rent geared to income housing options available to individuals with low to moderate income. Topics covered will include: The difference between rent geared to income and affordable housing, housing benefits including the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit, and Indigenous affordable housing programs. It is open to people with a developmental disability, their family members and/or support networks, and professionals in Ontario. Questions about this event can be sent to: [dsoerhousing@dsoer.ca](mailto:dsoerhousing@dsoer.ca).

### **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>

### **Building a Bigger We - Kindness as a Sturdy Foundation**

This webinar is an OIFN Reflective Practice Conversation on February 15 at 1 pm. Join the OIFN Community of Practice on Zoom to come together with other people, family members, loved ones, independent facilitators, and supportive allies who feel called to social justice and social action, share experiences, ideas, and stories. Learn together about belonging and inclusion, Independent Facilitation, and how we can bravely move forward together in a movement for change.

[Building a Bigger We - Kindness as a Sturdy Foundation](#)



# 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. SCALE will return February 7, 2023.
- *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](#).
- **\*NEW\*** *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.

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

### Fostering Information from Family & Children Services

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

## 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/3dRvIo2>**

### 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, 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. Waterloo PCMH [regular support group meetings](#) dates will come soon. The next [ADHD support group](#) will take place Jan. 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.

#### **McMaster University Research on Postpartum Depression Treatment**

McMaster University is conducting a research study to determine if women who receive an online peer-delivered CBT-Informed support for postpartum depression improve more than women who receive standard healthcare. You may be eligible if you are living in Southern Ontario, 18 yrs+ and have a baby under 12 months. For more information please email: [peercbt@mcmaster.ca](mailto:peercbt@mcmaster.ca). This study will be recruiting until mid-February. To register directly for the study:

<https://bit.ly/3Xt8NMr>

#### **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

### **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).

### **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).

## 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](#).

### **Elmira District Community Living – Day Services Visioning Session**

As EDCL plans for the future, they are seeking input from current and future participants, families and staff to ensure they continue to deliver services that are responsive to the needs of the community. Stakeholder Focus Groups facilitated by CMCS Consulting will be held in person throughout the day and evening of February 15. Please RSVP to Karole at 519-669-3205 x221 or [kmcdonnell@elmiraocl.com](mailto:kmcdonnell@elmiraocl.com) by February 13. If you are unable to attend, you will have a chance to provide feedback via survey.

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **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.

### **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](#).

### **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

### 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/work/workingandearningontheontario)

### Grassroots Growth Alliance Seeking Consultants

Grassroots Growth Alliance is seeking consultants for a unique project focused on accelerating the growth and capacity of several local grassroots organizations! In particular, they are looking for support in grant writing and finance, human resources, and data and evaluation. To learn more about this opportunity, [please click here.](#)

### CYPT Impact Survey Snapshots

You can now review the newest Child and Youth Planning Table Youth Impact Survey snapshot: *Experiences of Those Not Born in Canada* snapshot.

The Youth Impact Survey (YIS) is our community's opportunity to hear directly from young people about their own well-being. To center equity, social inclusion, and anti-discrimination, the CYPT has broken the results into various demographic and identity-based dimensions.

[CYPT-YIS-NBIC-1.pdf \(childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca\)](#)

### Cambridge Food Bank

Cambridge Food Bank has released a [2022 Impact Report](#). Read all about the incredible ways the [Cambridge Food Bank](#) impacts the community.

## 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.