

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 168
April 2024

Table of Contents

SEAC Updates	2
Moving Forward by Looking Back	4
What's Happening at WRFN	5
Erin's EarlyON Drop-Ins	5
Virtual Camp Fairs	6
Kaleidoscope Kids	7
ASE	8
Spectrum on the Spectrum	9
A New Chapter	10
Evening of Elegance	11
Community Info, Resources and Opportunities	13

What's In This Issue?

Did you know the first Tuesday in April is National Caregivers Day in Canada? If you are a caregiver, be sure to take a minute out of your busy schedule this month to give yourself some well-earned credit for all that you do for your family and/or loved one. If you know a caregiver, this is a good time to let them know how much their (often unrecognized) work is appreciated and lend your support if you can offer it!

April 2 also happens to be World Autism Acceptance Day (also known as World Autism Awareness Day)! Let's centre and uplift the voices of those with autism today and every day.

We hope this month's issue of Family Pulse can help make your life a little bit easier today and save you some time hunting for upcoming programs, events, webinars, and resources for your unique needs.

There are a ton of new offerings in our community this spring, so be sure to read through this issue. Please note that we have started to put asterisks (*) next to new and noteworthy newsletter items each month to help you see what's been newly added.



Support WRFN

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

SEAC Updates

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

At this month's SEAC there was discussion about the professional development (PD) for the Alternative Continuum of Education (ACE) staff and Educational Assistants (EAs). Throughout the year there have been several trainings including:

- A full-day PD day for teachers on alternative programming and literacy which focused on alternative Individual Education Plan development and exploring resources to help students reach literacy goals
- PD day for elementary and secondary EAs (half day for elementary, half day for secondary), about best practices to support ACE students, understanding the ACE framework, IEP objectives, and the roles of team members
- Half day of training for EAs and teachers together to work on building effective teams, including understanding oneself and team members' strengths and limitations, consensus, group performance, limitations, and goal setting
- Full-day PD day for teachers focused on transitions and other areas of learning including but not limited to sensory bins, mental health communication devices, and field trips

Overall, the feedback was very positive.

There was also a discussion of the Advancing Anti-Ableism in Education Symposium. The majority of speakers for the event have now been confirmed.

The Board is at a deficit in funding. As a result, they have ended all consultant contracts, but the intention is to hire consultants back once they know what funding will look like for the year.

There was discussion of the solar eclipse taking place on April 8, 2024. It will be considered a typical school day, but parents can decide if they want to send their children. Safety precautions were sent to teachers after March Break, and several thousand pairs of glasses are being ordered for students.

The SEAC Chair encouraged the group to think about other organizations that we need as part of SEAC.

In terms of the Trustee Report, the Trustees shared that the Safe, Caring, and Inclusive Schools Survey will be available for students in Grades 4 to 12 to complete beginning April 4, 2024. You can learn more about this [here](#).

The Trustees also discussed how they visited the Alternative Education site in Waterloo and learned about the many programs they offer as well as student experiences. For Alternative Education, the Board oversees education and partners with many other organizations, including Lutherwood and Camino which address mental health needs, and Monica Place, which assists young moms.

The next SEAC meeting will take place virtually on April 10, 2024.

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Special Education Advisory Committee Update

Submitted by Erin Sutherland & Karen Applebee

During last month's SEAC, Filomena Cruz, WCDSB Community Transition Support Worker, presented on the Community ACTIVE Living Co-op stream, Project Search and an overview of her role:

Background:

Project SEARCH: A partnership was formed with WCDSB, St. Mary's General Hospital, and KW Habilitation to bring Project SEARCH to Waterloo Region. Project SEARCH is a 10-month employment preparation program for students with primary diagnosis of an intellectual or developmental disability who are in their final year of secondary school. The program involves a rigorous timeline whereby applications are received early in the year following an information session for potential students. Applicants are screened by a steering committee made up of members from WCDSB, KW Habilitation and St. Mary's General Hospital. The successful applicants are notified in June and begin orientation in August and September.

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 as well as employment planning and support. We are currently in our second year with eight students in the program, and they have completed their first internship and transitioning into their second placement. WCDSB is looking forward to growing the enrolment at the Kitchener location and will begin the application process for next year's program in late February.

Further to this, WCDSB has been successful in expanding the Project SEARCH program to another host site located in Cambridge. WCDSB will be partnering with KW Habilitation and Cambridge Memorial Hospital to offer hospital internships for WCDSB students. We are very excited to enter this partnership and look forward to this exciting opportunity for our students.

Our interns are learning transferrable skills, which are applicable in any work environment. These skills include; skill development, time management, organizational skills, attention to detail, social skills, problem solving skills, working independently, confidentiality, following instructions, and communication skills.

Community Transition Support Worker: The Community Transition Support Worker works alongside teachers, students, and parents in the transition planning process for our students who receive Special Education supports. By providing information on the range of services and programs within the community, the Community Transition Support Worker supports student's transitioning from school to work, pursuing further education opportunities, community living, and/or community participation. Through established working relationships, the Community Transition Support Worker liaises and communicates with agencies and organizations that can further provide supports and services to our students upon graduation. Assistance is also providing to families who might need support with the application process for services, including Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Special Services at Home (SSAH), and Ontario Autism Program (OAP) funding. In collaboration with the schools and WCDSB Co-Op Departments, the Community Transition Support Worker assists with securing co-operative learning opportunities, community placements, and/or experiential learning opportunities through the Community Connections Program.

Ministry Updates included a discussion on summer funding for Special Education needs. WCDSB has another year of funds to utilize and is currently exploring ideas for this coming summer.

Agency Updates included the following:

Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (WWDSS): World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) preparations were underway for March 21/24. This date was selected to signify the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome. Everyone was encouraged to wear colorful socks on March 21 to raise awareness for WDSD.

They continue to offer the following programs: Speech & Music Social Groups for all ages, Skills for Independent Living for teens and young adults in partnership with KW Habilitation (Spring: Abuse Awareness), Teen Hangouts, and Mom's Night Out.

WRFN: Erin provided updates about WRFN at this meeting.

Member at Large, Jeanne Gravelle, provided an update on Sacramental preparation for students with special needs includes kits and dinner. More updates to come at next meeting.

Chair Bob Sikora provided Trustee updates: [Committee of the Whole \(wcdsb.ca\)](https://www.wcdsb.ca)

The next SEAC meeting will take place Wednesday, April 3.

Moving Forward by Looking Back

By: Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator

The week before I wrote this piece for Family Pulse, I was on vacation. I experienced many great things on my vacation including food, fun with a dear friend, and once-in-a-lifetime experiences. The thing I missed the most when I returned home though, was the sun! Like many others, I believe so many things seem more possible when the sun is out. Life just seems warmer and more hopeful. I honestly think I will picture my sun-drenched vacation view to make myself feel happy and more at peace when life is hard or sad in the coming months.

I think that is my message for everyone this month. When you are having a bad day, take a moment to lose yourself in an image that brings you peace. Maybe your moment or image is a memory with your grandchild, or a well-built Lego set, or a great ski hill. Whatever it is, remember that you got the opportunity to enjoy that person, experience, or food at one time, and you will again. There is always hope, we just have to remember it.

What's Happening at WRFN

WRFN programs and services are 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. Meetings do not require an appointment, but are on a first-come, first-served basis.

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
April 9	EarlyON Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	11-12 pm
April 16	EarlyON Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	4:30-6 pm
April 17	EarlyON Water St 73 Water St N, Unit 105, Cambridge	10-11 am
April 19	EarlyON Cedar Creek* 55 Hilltop Dr, Ayr	10-11:30 am
April 24	EarlyON St. Boniface 225 Starlight Ave, Breslau	10-11 am



Contact Erin -

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

More dates to come!



www.wrfn.info



**a timeslot must now be booked in advance for this location*

Did you miss a camp fair? Catch up with the 2024 videos.

Overnight Camps in Waterloo Region, Guelph-Wellington, and Beyond [2024 Camp Fair Video](#)

Presentations from: Hidden Acres, Camp Kennebec, Camp Towhee, Extend-A-Family, and information on other camp options.

Day Camps for Children, Aged 4-12 (Guelph-Wellington) [2024 Camp Fair Video](#)

Presentations from: Supporting Kids In Camp (SKIC), City of Guelph, Rainbow Day Camp, Kerry's Place, Creative Encounters, Childhood Apraxia & Speech, and information on other camp options.

Day Camps for Children, Aged 4-12 (Waterloo Region) [2024 Camp Fair Video](#)

Presentations from: City of Kitchener and Waterloo, City of Cambridge, Township of Woolwich, Engineering Science Quest (ESQ) Camp, Hidden Acres, SunBeam Medically Fragile Technically Dependent (MFTD) Camp and information on other camp options.

Summer Camps for Teens and Young Adults (Waterloo Region and Guelph Wellington) [2024 Camp Fair Video](#)

Presentations from: City of Kitchener, Adults in Motion (AIM), Kerry's Place, Extend-A-Family, Community Living Cambridge, City of Guelph, Supporting Kids in Camp (SKIC), Rainbow Day Camp, Sunbeam, KW Habilitation, Creative Encounters, Arts Express, Hidden Acres, and information on other camps.



Tuesdays, April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
9:30 - 10:30

EarlyON | Roger Street
(161 Roger St, 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 for children under 8 years of age and their parent or caring adult. 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

A partnership program of:



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

Important: While Kaleidoscope Kids is a drop-in program, families new to EarlyON will need to register with KEyON before arriving or when they arrive. Register for free at www.KEyON.ca.



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
5 - 8**

Group 2

**Grades
9 - 12**

When:

Group 1	Group 2
Grades 5-8	Grades 9-12
March 19 to April 30	May 2 to June 13
6:00-8:00pm	4:30-6:30pm

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.

In Participation With:



Holly Kane - holly.kane@oakbridge.ca

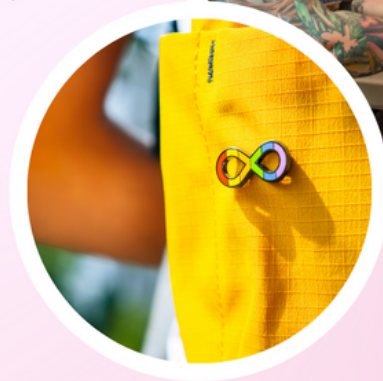
Spectrum on the Spectrum



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

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

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



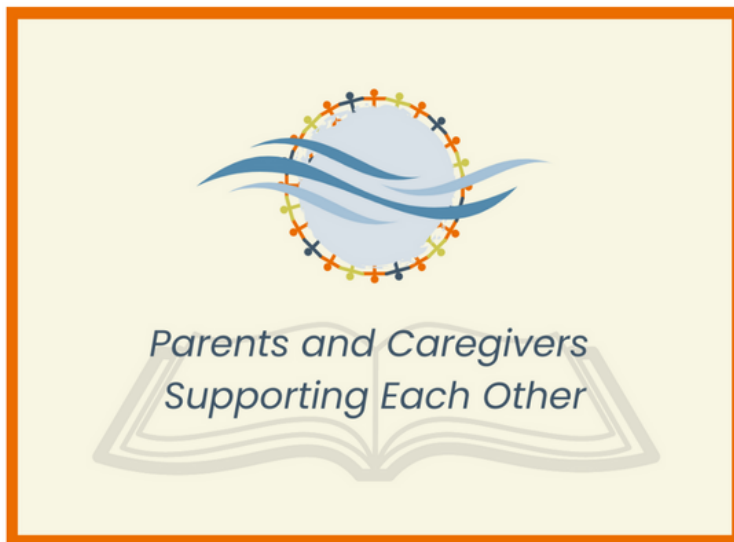
OUR EVENT CALENDARS

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

For more information,
please contact:

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





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.**



April 2, 2024
Open Meeting - No Set Discussion Agenda

Our April meeting will be an open meeting like our monthly half-hour *Ask Us Anything* segment.

It will be an opportunity to discuss topics and consider questions that are important to us.

All meetings are virtual Zoom meetings from 7:30pm-9:00pm

If you would like to receive emails about our monthly meetings (always the first Tuesday of the month), please email Mary at maryjpik@hotmai.com and ask to be put on our email list.

Waterloo Region Family Network Presents

Evening of Elegance

YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us for our Annual Signature Fundraising Event

Friday	APRIL 19, 2024
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St. George Banquet Hall
665 King St. N., Waterloo

DOORS OPEN 6:45 PM

To learn more and buy tickets:
www.wrfn.info/Evening-of-Elegance



Join us at our favourite night of the year, Evening of Elegance, on Friday, April 19!

Tickets will be on sale until Friday, April 5.

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/waterloo-region-family-network/events/evening-of-elegance-7/>

What's Happening at WRFN

Ask A Self-Advocate

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

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

Parent Mentor Program

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

School-Issue Parent Support Group

This peer-led group provides support, advice and a safe environment for parents who have questions or concerns about school issues affecting their children with special needs. The WRFN School Issues Support Group meets on the last Wednesday of each month during the school year. For more information, please contact Sue Simpson at Sue.simpson@wrfn.info.

Family Resource Coach

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

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

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

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

Coffee Club

Greetings from Coffee Club! We currently meet on Zoom, usually on Thursdays from 3 - 4 pm. Generally, we are just catching up and chatting, mixed with a little bit of watching YouTube. Coffee Club has also started meeting in-person two Mondays each month from 7 to 9 pm.

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

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

Programs & Recreation

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre

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

Shore Centre – Pride and Joy

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

Hope for Families Counselling Centre

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

P4P - Planning and Facilitation Collaborative

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings

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

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

Sunbeam

Sunbeam's new Recreation & Wellness Program enhances the quality of life of program participants. With a focus on recreation, socialization, inclusion, and community, including both physical and emotional wellness, the Recreation & Wellness team provides fun and engaging programming at various community locations.

- Offered as a fee-for-service option to individuals living with a developmental disability.
- Program participation is an eligible activity for the use of Passport Funds.
- For all activities and events, participants must be accompanied by their own support person or a family member.

For more information about this program, its calendar of upcoming events, and how to register please click to visit: www.sunbeamcommunity.ca/recreation-wellness-program.

Fun Fearless Females

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

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

EarlyON Grandparents Connect

This program brings together a compassionate community ready to provide grandparents with the knowledge, resources, and emotional support needed if they are the legal guardians or primary caregivers for their grandchildren. Weekly meetings include childminding, snacks, and the opportunity to increase your circle of support. EarlyON | Oak Creek (80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener). Email capc@caminowellbeing.ca to register.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

OK2BEME*

OK2BEME– Families in TRANSition (FIT) is a program for trans, non-binary, and gender-questioning kids and youth ages 5-18 and their parents/caregivers. FIT is open to all adults who play a primary caregiving* role for a trans/non-binary/gender-questioning person aged 5-18. There are separate groups (by age) for the kids and youth that run at the same time in different rooms. If the young person doesn't want to attend or isn't able, the parents/caregivers can still attend the parent/caregiver group. Please visit the [webpage](#) for more info about the FIT program. This group will run Monday evenings from 5:30-7:30 pm for 10 weeks from April 8 – June 17 (no group May 20). A group for youth aged 13-17 will be offered in the fall. We'll share more information as that date approaches.

*biological, adoptive, kinship, foster, legal guardians, informal caregiving and extended family

Siblings Canada: Savvy Siblings

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

LCOworks

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

SPECTRUM Youth Under the Rainbow*

Join SPECTRUM across the Region as they read stories, explore art and have fun together in a safe and supported environment for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, families and allies. Visit <https://wrfn.info/CommunityNewsAndUpdates/Family-and-Youth-Under-the-Rainbow.htm> to see a full list of upcoming events and where to register.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

City of Kitchener

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

[Click here](#) to see upcoming courses and to register!

Keep Your Head Up Foundation

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

Special Olympics

Visit the Special Olympics events calendar to get additional information, resources and registration links for events coming up in Kitchener-Waterloo.

<https://www1.specialolympicsontario.com/events/calendar/>

Ready. Set. READ!...

[Kitchener Public Library](#): Ready. Set. READ!...is a program for JK, SK and Grade 1 students. Through stories, literacy games and reading in small groups with volunteers the program aims to show kids reading can be fun! Sign up online at:

<https://kpl.events.mylibrary.digital/event?id=55160> or by phone: 519-743-0271 x261.

YMCA Diabetes Fit

Are you struggling to get started with healthy habits like exercise? Are you at risk of, or living with type 2 diabetes? Join our free Diabetes Fit program to build life changing habits at home or at the YMCA. Join at the Chaplin Family YMCA (250 Hespler Road, Cambridge) on Mondays from 2:30 – 4 pm, until June 24. Virtual classes take place on Thursdays from 6:30 to 8 pm, April 4 until June 20. [Learn more here](#) or contact Marsha at marsha.phillips@ytr.ymca.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections

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

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

City of Cambridge

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

Skills Corner Adult Day Centre

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

Cheer Ability

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

MoveMeant For All

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

Join the Smart Waterloo Region Nurture Youth Group

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

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

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

Region-wide tutoring information

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

Level Up

[Level Up](#) in partnership with the City of Waterloo and City of Kitchener are facilitating three eight-week play-based programs introducing kids aged 9-12 years to topics crucial to generating a social justice practice. Register now at [City of Waterloo ActiveNet](#) and at [City of Kitchener ActiveNet](#)!

Corte

Corte Kitchener is an exciting and unique racquet and social club! Our programs are designed to offer fun and competitive play for all types of players, from beginners to advanced! Questions? Please reach out to our Pickleball Director, Matthew Pitts: matthew@corte.ca.

<https://cortekw.ca/programs>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Recreational Respite

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

Sensory Workout

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

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

March of Dimes Connect & Share

Wouldn't it be wonderful to visit with someone regularly who shares your interests? March of Dimes virtual Connect & Share program was designed to make that happen. You will be matched with a volunteer who shares your interests and your buddy will visit with you (as often as you like) – just for the fun of it. You can have phone visits or you can have a video call using a platform like Zoom. <https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/programs/rec/connect>

Spectrum BRIQ House

BRIQ House is Spectrum's monthly group for Black, Indigenous, and other Racialized Queer folks in Waterloo Region! Come meet for discussions and community building. We connect both in-person at Spectrum and virtually on Zoom.

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 519-622-6550 x109.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

KidsAbility Behaviour Support Services

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

March of Dimes

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

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

Community of Hearts Improv Club

Come and learn through games and activities designed to help connect us through laughter and play. Program includes 6 improv workshops with a showcase on the final day to invite your family and friends to! No experience is necessary, just a willingness to try something new and have fun! Improv Club will take place on Mondays (April 22, 29, May 6, 13, 27, and June 3) on Mondays from 4 - 6 pm. Improv Club costs \$120 to join and is also Passport Funding Friendly. If you would like to register for our upcoming programs or events, please send us an email at info@communityofhearts.ca or call us at 519-826-9056.

LEG Up!

Registration is now open for LEG Up! Spring Session 2024, running from April 2 - June 7. Join LEG Up! to create, learn, cook, and bake. [Click here to view LEG Up! Spring 2024.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

EarlyON April Programming

You can now register for EarlyON programming. You and your family are invited to **drop in to an EarlyON location** throughout Waterloo Region and in the City of Stratford. Specialty and online programs that require pre-registration are also available. Check out the **KEyON calendars** for more information. To view the monthly program calendars by site, or to register for specialty programs, login to your **KEyON** account and select the EarlyON location of your choice.

Muslim Social Services' Programs

Muslim Social Services KW provides a professional, confidential, and affordable counseling service at The Family Centre Hub. Counseling services extend to individuals, children, couples, and families, including group therapy sessions conducted in various languages. We are dedicated to offering culturally sensitive counseling tailored to victims of gender-based and domestic violence.

Al-Nour Project

The Al-Nour Project is an exclusive program for young women aged 13-25, to uplift, inspire, and empower. They participate in both fun group activities and focus on building relationships. The program will be facilitated by the counsellor Fatima Haneef, once a month on Thursdays from 6-8 PM. To register and for more info, visit our website at www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org, email info@muslimsocialserviceskw.org, or call (519) 772-4399 ext. 2707.

Vibe and Thrive

Vibe and Thrive is a program from Cambridge Foodbank and Porchlight for high-school aged boys. Earn your volunteer hours while having fun and meeting other teens your age. Every Thursday from April 4 – May 16 from 4:30- 7 pm at the Cambridge Food Bank. This program is free and includes dinner. Bus tickets are available. Need more information? Contact Vanessa at 519-622-6550 x 109 or vtonicic@cambridgefoodbank.org.

Black Youth Mental Wellness Circle

The African Community Wellness Initiative staff are trained for Afrocentric Clinical Therapeutic Practice with individuals, families, groups and youth. They now offer a Black Youth Mental Wellness Circle, a space for Black youth (ages 13 – 18) to engage, connect and grow, on Tuesdays from 6 – 7:30 pm. For more information, please contact chantal@africancommunitywellness.org. Register at <https://africancommunitywellness.org/mental-health-wellness/>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

bitKIDS Behaviour Consulting – Early Learning Program*

Spring 2024 Sessions for bitKIDS Behaviour Consulting begin April 1, May 6, or June 10. The Early Learning Program might be for you if: Your child is showing signs of delayed communication skills, he/she is not showing progress in SLP, OT, or other settings, they do not respond when their name is called, does not appear to attend to others in the environment, or does not imitate you. For more information or to register, email info@bitkids.ca or call 519-742-5437.

<https://bitkids.ca/early-learning-program-spring-2024-sessions/>

Resilience Project *

The Resilience Project from FACS Waterloo has some new programming for children, youth, and caregivers this spring. Learn more and register for programs like, Trusting Loving Connections, Circle of Security, and Mindful Kids Group at <https://resiliencecollective.ca/programs-offered>.

Rainbow Family Drop-In*

Rainbow Families drop-in runs Thursdays at EarlyON | Roger St from 3:30 - 4:30 pm. Join other 2SLGBTQIA+ children (aged 0-6), caring adults and families in play and exploration together! EarlyON Educators and a SPECTRUM Registered Early Childhood Educator are available to provide support and information around early learning topics, community resources, programs, and referrals in a play-based environment.

EarlyON x YMCA of Three Rivers*

In addition to the six EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Waterloo Region, the YMCA of Three Rivers now offers mobile programs at various sites in Waterloo Region and in Stratford. Join other children, caring adults and families in play and exploration together! EarlyON Educators are available to provide support and information around early learning topics, community resources, programs and referrals in a play-based environment.

For a list of mobile sites and the programs they offer visit the [Locations Page](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops, Training & Events

Passport Community Development Team & Central West Specialized Development Services

Passport End of Year Virtual Drop-In

Have questions about the end of the passport year? Join for an end of year themed virtual drop-in. A member of the team will be happy to answer your questions.

Drop in #2 – April 3, 12 - 1 pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81963584657#success>

Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Navigators Information Session*

[YMCA Early Learning and Child Care \(ELCC\) Navigators](#) help remove barriers to accessing child care for equity deserving groups in Waterloo Region. Want to learn more about the interesting and impactful work they do? The ELCC Navigator team will be holding virtual sessions via Zoom to help our community learn more about this partnership between the YMCA of Three Rivers, EarlyON Waterloo Region, and the Region of Waterloo. At this session you'll meet the ELCC Navigator team, learn what they do to support BIPOC communities, and how you can connect with them. Join the ELCC Navigator team via Zoom on Wednesday, April 3 from 12 – 1 pm.

[Register for this free session.](#)

Microboards Ontario*

Do you have a child under 18? Is a Microboard a future consideration for you and your family? Join this workshop module on April 4 with Microboards Ontario. This 3-part, virtual and free workshop series, facilitated by a parent of a son with a Microboard, will help you lay the foundation for a sustainable and person-directed future for your loved one. You'll learn the best tips for preparing for when your child turns 13, create an environment that builds relationships and embed the values and principles of a Microboard into future planning.

<https://v2.mycommunityhub.ca/#/program-details/29365>

Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health – Introduction to Solids*

Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health is offering a two-part “Introduction to Solids” workshop on April 9 and 11 from 10:30 am – 12 pm on Zoom for new parents.

Register at CAPC@caminowellbeing.ca (Zoom link will be sent early April).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

ACT Workshop for Leaders in the Developmental Services Sector

Calling all leaders, managers, and supervisors working at agencies supporting individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in Canada! The ACT workshop is coming up on the following dates: April 4, April 11, and May 9.

[Register here](#). Questions? Email us at: PACT@camh.ca.

Microboards Ontario Family Forum: Learning Together

Join Microboards Ontario on April 20 at 9:30 for a day-long event for connecting, learning, and building community. Sessions include Succession Planning, Journey to Belonging and Me, Building the Future: Towards a National Caregiving Strategy, and more. Learn more and register here:

<https://v2.mycommunityhub.ca/#/program-details/25701>

Perinatal Mental Health Foundations Training

Join on April 25 from 9 am – 5 pm for 8 hours of material covering foundational aspects of Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders and Perinatal Mental Health affecting families. The collaborative process and knowledge sharing allows for active learning structures and exchanges between facilitators and participants.

<https://togetherwaterloo.ca/education/april-25-foundations-training/>.

P4P Developing your Individualized Housing Vision Action Plan*

If you are ready to create an individualized housing plan with your loved one, a plan that will help your loved one realize a home of their own, the Partners for Planning 10-week facilitated individualized housing workshop can help make this happen.

P4P in partnership with Kelly Casey is hosting a 10-week Virtual Program beginning Friday, April 26 from 10 am - 12 pm. The program will run for 10 weeks each Friday. If you are interested in registering for the program please complete

[THIS FORM](#).

Together Waterloo Conference 2024*

Join the Together Waterloo Conference on May 1 from 10 am to 4 pm at the Kitchener Public Library, Queen Street North, Kitchener for powerful discussions on Perinatal Mental Health in the Margins. [Register here](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Stratford Festival Relaxed Performances*

Relaxed Performances (RPs) are designed with autistic, neurodivergent, and otherwise disabled audiences in mind, but are also excellent for new theatre-goers. RPs will modify lighting and sound cues and be introduced by a pre-show talk. You are also welcome to leave and re-enter the theatre as many times as you need. Upcoming relaxed performances at the Stratford Festival include:

Wendy and Peter Pan (July 20) is a modern adventure that delivers the same unforgettable thrills, spills and fairy dust of the original tale.

Romeo and Juliet (October 18) is a cautionary tale about love, revenge, and familial pride set in the Renaissance era.

For more details or to order tickets, visit stratfordfestival.ca/Relaxed or call 1-800-567-1600. Group rates are available for 6 or more people.

If you have questions about Relaxed Performances at the Stratford Festival or would like to inquire about group rates, please email

accessibility@stratfordfestival.ca.

Stepping Stones Expressive Arts*

Intuitive Painting

Stepping Stones Expressive Art's consistently popular Intuitive Painting sessions are back for an evening time slot this spring Thursdays, April 4 until May 9, from 7 - 8:30 pm. Intuitive Painting classes will be held via Zoom and will cost \$125 for all 6 sessions or \$25 per session. Optional art kits are available for \$30. During this time, participants will be guided to let their inner voices speak through painting with watercolours. This is a peaceful and calming experience where there is no judgement and no experience required.

Register by emailing steppingstonesarts@gmail.com.

Art and Nature Retreat

Stepping Stones Expressive Arts has also been asked back to Homer Watson House and Gallery in Kitchener to offer a full-day Art and Nature retreat on Saturday, May 25 from 10 am to 3:30 pm. They will explore the beautiful natural surroundings at the gallery, share tea and coffee and snacks (these are provided however, please bring your own brown bag lunch), and enjoy time for creative projects using a wide array of art materials.

The cost for this special event is \$120. Please email Wendy and Rachel for more information or contact the gallery. Here's the link to register on the Homer

Watson website, <https://www.homerwatson.on.ca/our-events/#id=705&cid=1700&wid=801&type=Cal>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

The Guelph Barrier Free Committee

Save the date for The Guelph Barrier Free Committee's Flag Raising Ceremony to recognize National Accessibility Week on Monday, May 27 from 12 - 12:30 pm at Market Square (Guelph City Hall). Visit guelphbarrierfreecommittee.org for more information.

WRDSB Symposium

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is excited to announce the 2024 Building Community: Advancing Anti-Ableism in Education Symposium. This one-day event will take place during National AccessAbility Week on Thursday, May 30, from 9 am to 4 pm at Wilfrid Laurier University.

This inaugural event invites educators, community members, parents and caregivers, students, and local leaders to come together and learn more about ableism and how to dismantle it in education systems and throughout the community.

Registration details will be shared closer to the date for those interested in attending.

<https://www.wrdsb.ca/about-the-wrdsb/indigenous-equity-and-human-rights-department/human-rights/education-symposium/>

Woolwich Counselling

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Resources

Aide Canada

Many of Aide Canada's resources relate to autism, but there are also plenty that apply to all disabilities. There is a parent series of "Ask a Question" where families & self-advocates can respond with their experience. There is also a resource page where you can borrow books and items and is available Canada wide. Check it out at www.aidecanada.ca.

Breastfeeding Dashboard

Canada's "[Breastfeeding Dashboard](#)" is now available on Public Health Agency of Canada's Public Health Infobase platform. Along with this data tool, the first edition of Canada's Breastfeeding Progress Report is available. The data provides an overview of breastfeeding rates in Canada, including information on breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity, examined by various geographic and sociodemographic factors. Reasons for not breastfeeding and reasons for stopping breastfeeding before six months are also presented, as are rates of vitamin D supplementation of breastfed infants. Questions related to the new materials can be directed to: dca_public_inquiries@phac-aspc.gc.ca

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

CCRW Employment Services help job seekers with disabilities get connected with local businesses. They provide industry-specific training, workplace accommodation and adjustment planning, employer matching, and access to a hidden job market.

For more information or to register, call: Jennie Di Girolamo – Employment Facilitator (519) 571 6788 ext. 7661 or email [jdigirolamo@ccrw.org](mailto:jdigiolamo@ccrw.org)

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

March of Dimes Hi, Tech!

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Plexus

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

Positive Behaviour Supports Corporation (PBS Corp.)

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

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

Family Support Network for Employment

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

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

Rainbow Community Calendar

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

Imagine Canada

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Ontario Caregiver Association

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

Fostering Information from Family & Children Services

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

EarlyON Mobile Sites

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Partners for Planning

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

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

The Royal Mental Health Care & Research

The Royal Mental Health Care & Research is one of Canada's foremost mental health care, teaching and research hospitals, located in Ottawa. The Institute of Mental Health Research, affiliated with the University of Ottawa, brings together leading mental health professionals, scientists, and technology to gain a deeper understanding of the brain, and investigate innovative approaches to preventing and treating mental illness. To learn about The Royal's programs, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/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

EarlyON Onsite Services

EarlyON Centres partner with a variety of community agencies to provide onsite appointments for your child and family. [Learn more.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Guelph Wellington Family Network

A group of family members and unpaid caregivers supporting an adult with a developmental disability. The Network is peer-based and led by families. The Guelph Wellington Family Network helps build connections and friendships, supports members through networking, education, and socializing and connects members to opportunities, supports, and information.

familynetworkGW@Gmail.com

Indwell

Indwell is a Christian charity creating affordable housing communities to support people seeking health, wellness & belonging. They are one of the fastest-growing developers of new supportive affordable housing in Ontario. Looking for housing? Visit <https://indwell.ca>

Qualia Counselling Services

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

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

Pearson Airport

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

HCARDD Updated Website

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

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

Practice Guidance for ALC Patients

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

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

CanFASD Mental Health Resource and Practice Guide

The CanFASD Research Network just released a new resource that all mental health professionals need in their toolbox. This resource is grounded in the belief that people with FASD are capable of significant change and personal growth. It is therefore imperative that, as mental health professionals, we continue to explore how we can adapt our supports so that individuals with FASD can benefit from practices suited to their unique strengths, challenges, and neurodevelopmental needs. [Towards Healthy Outcomes for Individuals with FASD](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Public Health & Paramedic Services

Public Health and Paramedic Services: Public Health nurses are now available at Region of Waterloo Welcome Spaces, as part of a pilot partnership with Community Services. Welcome Spaces provide services for residents needing income, housing and childcare subsidy support. The addition of Public Health nurses in the Welcome Spaces allows individuals/families to connect for support in an easy-to-access location. Nurses offer information on healthy pregnancies, postpartum health and healthy growth and development of children ages 0-6 years. Nurses will be available at The Family Centre on April 25 and May 23 from 6 - 7:30 pm.

Mondays: 99 Regina St S, Waterloo (9 am – 4 pm)

Tuesdays: 20 Weber St, Kitchener (9 am – 4 pm)

Thursday: 150 Main St, Cambridge (9 am – 4 pm)

Early Learning and Child Care Navigator

Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Navigators seek opportunities to assist families in accessing Child Care, EarlyON programming, and other services that support the healthy development of children age 0 – 6. They focus on supporting families who experience barriers accessing these services.

- [Send an online request to meet with an Early Learning & Child Care Navigator Request](#)
- [Email an Early Learning and Child Care Navigator](#)
- Call 519-741-8585 ext. 3008 and ask to speak with an Early Learning and Child Care Navigator

Canadian Dental Care Plan

Looking to learn more about the new Canadian Dental Care Plan? Details can be found here: <https://wrfn.info/CommunityNewsAndUpdates/Canadian-Dental-Care-Plan.htm>

Family and Children's Services Waterloo Region

[Family and Children's Services Waterloo Region](#) has improved its Group Referral process based on your valuable feedback. It's more efficient, straightforward for sharing with families, and simpler for families to self-refer. Below, you will find a LINK that takes you directly to the Resilience Project website, where you can explore Winter Programming for your referral needs.

<https://resiliencecollective.ca/programs-offered>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Accessibility Services Offered Through the KPL

Borrow a Chromebook

Kitchener Public Library partnered with the City of Kitchener to expand WIFI access in public spaces. Community members can now borrow Chromebooks from the collection to take home for a one-week loan period. The devices are available at all five library locations.

Daisy Reader with Download Content

Daisy readers are intended for customers who are blind, have low vision, or have another form of print disability. KPL recently purchased 15 new Daisy reader machines with enhanced navigation functions for easy use. They've added eight Victor Stratus machines to play Daisy audio discs and digital direct-to-player content through the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) digital library. They also have five Victor Stream readers, a smaller pocket-sized device that only plays digital direct-to-player content.

The library has been lending Daisy Readers and Daisy discs for a long time, but this is the first time lending Daisy devices with pre-loaded digital direct-to-player content. Staff can pre-load a mix of about 50 titles of different genres and interests on the Stratus and Stream readers, and the content rotates every few months. Customers can also complete a reading profile, and library staff will load additional digital content that suits their reading interests and preferences on a device for them.

New Yoto Mini Collection

The Yoto Mini is an excellent audio format for young kids. The small audio player plays audiobooks encoded on colourful plastic-coated cards. The Yoto players and accessories are nicely designed, attractive, and easy to use and manipulate. They are for children from birth to 12 years old. They are accessibility friendly for users with print, learning or developmental disabilities. The current collection includes 13 Yoto players, each with a set of audio cards on a different theme.

Visiting Library Service

Visiting Library is a free service that provides monthly delivery of library material to Kitchener residents who cannot visit the library in person.

Visiting Library customers can select their library material by placing holds through the catalogue or have a Visiting Library Selector (volunteer) gather library material based on their DiscoverRead form (reading profile).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Employment Solution's Developmental Disabilities and Home Care*

AO Employment Solution provides individuals living with Developmental Disability with professional personalized care including respite care, personal care, overnight care, and care management services. Learn more at <https://www.aoemploymentsolution.ca/>.

Surrey Place and CAMH - New Online Mental Health Toolkit

The Developmental Disabilities Primary Care Program (DDPCP) at Surrey Place introduces a new toolkit designed to assist physicians in addressing the mental health needs of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). These resources complement the Canadian guidelines on primary care for adults with IDD, filling essential gaps in specialized supports. [View the Mental Health Toolkit here.](#)

211*

Life can be hard, but finding help is easy. Contact 211 day or night to find support for all of life's challenges. Call toll free at 1-877-330-3213. 211 is free and confidential and offers support in 150+ languages.

Kerry's Place Brave Space*

Brave Space, a collection of resources, services and supports from 2SLGBTQ+ Youth and their families, is a step to honor, empower, and support everyone who lives at the intersection of autism and the 2SLGBTQ+ spectrums with information and evidence-informed resources and services. Kerry's Place aims to support those in our community who are navigating, or supporting a loved one who is navigating, their journey of discovering their identity within the spectrums of gender and sexuality. They are collaborating with subject matter experts to help ensure that the supports developed are evidence-informed and in line with current best practices for the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

<https://www.kerrysplace.org/brave-space-at-kerrys-place/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Support Groups

Parents for Children's Mental Health (PCMH)

If you are a parent/caregiver worried about your child, or a young person looking for help yourself – please reach out. Our network of child and youth mental health centres has 4000 professionals ready to help children, youth and families with free counselling and treatment. We provide care in person, on the phone and virtually. No problem is too big or small. [Join the next Waterloo PCMH meeting on April 17 at 7 pm.](#)

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

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

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

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario

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

Province-Wide Monthly Virtual Groups for Adults with FASD

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support was created to provide a safe space for families of African descent to come together to meet and connect, share resources, expertise and needs, inspire and support one another through our unique and often challenging and isolating journey of raising Black children or supporting a sibling, of any age, with a disability. This is a volunteer-run group that meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month from 7 – 8:30 pm via Zoom. There will be guest speakers, resource sharing, support and mentorship opportunities for attendees. Contact: For more details or to register, please contact bpsgroup2020@gmail.com.

South Asian Wellness Group

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

The A-Team of Waterloo Region

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

Virtual Peer Support for Newly-Diagnosed Autistic Women

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CIA - Connecting, Interests and Activities

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

If you have any questions, please reach out to Kelly Groh at 519-731-3923 or grohtech@xplornet.com.

Virtual Support Group for Adolescents with FASD

The return of the Virtual Support Group for Teens with FASD. This group meets every Wednesday night at 7 – 8:30 pm. Contact Rob for more information at rmacdonald@lutherwood.ca.

Street Therapy

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

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

Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society Support Group

Mothers Connection is a group supporting Moms with young children with Down Syndrome with childcare provided. Go to WWDSS.ca or email info@wwdss.ca for more information.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CADDAC Support Groups

ADHD Support Groups - Adult ADHD and Parent Support Groups

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

ADHD and Substance Use Disorder Peer-led Support Group

Through these virtual group sessions, participants will receive emotional support and mentorship, critical education about ADHD, and strategies on how to manage some of the core symptoms that have led to substance use. These groups will be offered in different time zones across Canada and will be peer-led by trained Peer Support Facilitators.

<https://caddac.ca/programs-and-events/#support-groups>

Youth ADHD Group Coaching Program: 16 – 24 years

In the dynamic and engaging Youth ADHD Group Coaching Program, teens and young adults will not only learn more about ADHD and the impact it can have on their lives, but also gain tools and techniques to set themselves up for success and learn how to grow from past experiences and achieve their goals.

Together, we'll work on: living with ADHD, managing emotions, time, and money, self-advocacy, creating their own personal goal plan.

Running April to May 2024. Limited spots available.

<https://caddac.ca/programs-events/youth-adhd-group-coaching-program-16-24-years/>

Adult ADHD Group Coaching Program

Are you an adult who struggles with ADHD? Do you feel overwhelmed by everything on your to-do list? Are you ready to learn new skills and create positive change in your life? This six-week group coaching program will introduce individuals to foundational topics for living well with ADHD, help them gain insight, build upon their strengths and add strategies to their ADHD toolbox.

****Please note that this program is designed for individuals personally living with ADHD.****

Running April to May 2024. Limited spots available.

<https://caddac.ca/programs-events/adult-adhd-coaching-program/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

Vulnerable Persons Alert - Support Bill 74

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

https://www.moniquetaylormpp.ca/vulnerable_persons_alert

Infant & Child Studies Group at University of Waterloo

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

Siblings Canada

For Families

Are you a sibling of a person with a disability? Watch the webcast, [Understanding the Experiences of Siblings of People with Disabilities](#). The session sheds light on some of the research Siblings Canada has done on siblings of individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities, and the challenges, joys, and important roles that siblings play in the lives of their family members with disabilities. After watching the video, you will have the chance to [answer 3 questions to help with the work](#) they do.

For Service Providers

If you work for a community agency, service provider, or disability organization, Siblings Canada wants to learn more about how organizations are including siblings in their programs and services. [If you want to contribute to this research, please consider completing this 5-minute survey.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Community of Hearts

Community of Hearts is looking to add some new programs to its Day Program as well as some new group Evening Programs! They are currently discussing the subject options with participants during the Day Program and would also love caregivers, supports, and participants' who attend other programs feedback! The survey should only take you 2-3 minutes.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3N725XM>

WRDSB

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

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

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

Phone: 416-535-8501 ext. 32817

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

OMSSA Recreation Providers Survey

This Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) survey collects baseline information about recreational care availability across Ontario. Results will help identify gaps in provision, staffing and funding across the province.

[Take the OMSSA Recreation Providers Survey here.](#)

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Lab at Queen's University

The ASD Lab at Queen's University is running an online study called the Tone of Voice study. We are trying to better understand how youth perceive emotions through tone of voice. We are seeking youth with and without autism between the ages of 13-18 to participate in our study. The study takes about 75 minutes to complete over Zoom with an experimenter, and youth will be compensated \$30 for their time. If you have question or would like to participate, please contact Daniel at tov.study@queensu.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Queens University Study – Caregiver Stigma Experiences

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

Karis Disability Services – Host Families Needed

We are looking for caring families and individuals: please consider sharing and welcoming a person with a disability into your home. In addition to personal rewards, as a Host Family you will receive ongoing training and support from professional staff and non-taxable financial remuneration. Part-time (respite) host families are always welcome to apply!

E-mail: gwfamilyhome@christian-horizons.org

<https://christianhorizons.org/host-family-services/>

Federal Survey Re: Registered Disability Savings Plans

The federal government is currently hosting a survey on Registered Disability Savings Plans. If you or a relative has an RDSP, we would encourage you to complete the survey, which can be found here: www.pra.ca/SurveyCDSP.

Shared Picture Book Study

Wilfrid Laurier University Department of Psychology invites parents/caregivers of children age 3-5 years to participate in a “shared picture book study”. During the one-hour sessions, parents will do a survey and children will engage in literacy games with the researcher. Parents will take home picture books to explore together with their child in between sessions. Commitment time: five (5) in-person sessions 3-4 weeks apart. If you have any questions, please email Katie Reid at reid4150@mylaurier.ca.

ADHD Community Needs Assessment Survey*

CADDAC is looking to expand its programs and services in Canada, and would like to get a better understanding of how to support individuals living with ADHD and their families. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. Those who complete the survey will be entered into a draw to win 1 of 3 \$50 Amazon gift cards!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JFHP55X>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

DSO*

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) is looking for your feedback! If you've had experience connecting with DSO and would like to share how they can improve services, please visit <https://www.dsontario.ca/feedback>.

Barriers for Participation in Physical Activity Study*

You're invited to participate in an online survey to help a Wilfrid Laurier University PhD student gain valuable insights into the topic, barriers and facilitators of physical activity among adults with intellectual disabilities. Feedback will be used to identify resources, tools, or program needs to promote physical activity of this population in subsequent study.

If as a caregiver (parent, guardian, friend, and relative) you are an adult over the age of 18, free from intellectual disabilities, provide care, and are knowledgeable about the daily patterns of an adult aged 18-64 with an intellectual disability and are interested, you would complete an online survey (about 15-25 minutes) about demographics, physical activity levels of the person with intellectual disabilities, and the physical activity barriers and facilitators you perceive adults with intellectual disabilities experience. This study has been approved by Wilfrid Laurier University's Research Ethics Board (REB#8659).

https://wlu.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d6m5iWuZ5QajCHc

Please feel free to contact the facilitator, Hashem, at faal8600@mylaurier.ca if you have any questions/concerns.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

News

Anne Stafford Light Up the Future Bursary

Community Living Ontario is excited to announce that applications for the Anne Stafford Light Up the Future Bursary are now open. More information can be found at: [Anne Stafford Light Up the Future Bursary](#). The bursary is open to people who are residents of Ontario, aged 18 years or older, and identify as having an intellectual disability. Each recipient is awarded up to \$1,000. Deadline for submissions: Friday, April 26 at 5 pm.

Waterloo Region District School Board

We are excited to share the Waterloo Region District School Board's 2023 Community Report Card.

Our [2023 Community Report Card](#) shares the work we have done to support the WRDSB Strategic Plan over the past year.

Read in detail about the work we did in 2023:

- Progress Made and the Path Ahead
- Achievement & Conditions for Learning that Support Student Well-being

[View the 2023 Community Report Card in PDF format.](#)

To help share this report with your communities, we have provided translated copies in Arabic, Dari, Ukrainian, Turkish and Spanish (see attached). These translations are also available to download on the [Community Report Card webpage](#).

Inclusion Canada

Inclusion Canada, the national organization of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families, is calling for further change to Canada's medical assistance in dying (MAiD) law now that Bill C-62 has passed.

Bill C-62 was passed by the Senate on February 29, and will soon receive Royal Assent. Through this bill, the federal government has delayed the legalization of medical assistance in dying on the basis of mental illness as a sole medical condition by three years - until 2027. If Bill C-62 hadn't been passed beforehand, MAiD for mental illness would have automatically become legal on March 17th, 2024 due to a "sunset clause" in the existing legislation.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

“We’re relieved that MAiD for mental illness has been delayed, but more sweeping changes to our MAiD legislation are needed,” said Krista Carr, Executive Vice-President of Inclusion Canada, “A repeal of the sunset clause and a repeal of track two in its entirety is urgently required.”

Canada’s current MAiD law - which offers assisted suicide to people with a disability whose death is not reasonably foreseeable under “track two”- reinforces the deeply-embedded ableist belief that life with a disability is a life worse than death. Carr maintains that it is “incredibly harmful.”

In 2019, then Justice Minister David Lametti chose not to appeal a lower court decision which called for MAiD to be made available to persons with disabilities whose deaths are not reasonably foreseeable. He did so despite pleas from people with disabilities, disability organizations of persons with disabilities, and warnings from the United Nations.

Representatives of the United Nations have indicated that the existing law is discriminatory.

Health Canada has reported 682 MAiD deaths where the person did not have a reasonably foreseeable death, more than one death a day in the first 21.5 months following the 2021 changes to eligibility criteria.

“Families of people with disabilities, like mine, are terrified by track two MAiD and its potential further expansion,” said Moira Wilson, President of Inclusion Canada, “We want our children to be fully valued as equal citizens, supported to live good lives and be fully included in the community, not offered state-assisted suicide on the basis of ‘suffering’ that is not inherent in their disability, but rather is a result of lack of income and disability support.”

Wilson continued “When people with a disability reach the point of considering MAiD, they’re experiencing a crisis created by a society that excludes them - it’s that simple. Inclusion Canada understands this to be true; it’s time for our elected officials to connect the dots as well.”

Inclusion Canada would like to see elected officials bring Canada’s MAiD law back into alignment with disability rights by repealing track two, and for the government to make significant investments in community-based disability support and mental health care. The organization urges the government to defend these proposed changes in court.