

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 140
December 2021

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What's In This Issue?

Welcome to December!

There's a flurry of activity in our community this month. From winter activities, holiday celebrations and educational seminars, December's got it all.

We're still seeing lots of virtual offerings this month, but it's exciting to see recreational opportunities being offered in person again. We hope you can get out and about this month with your loved ones to celebrate the frosty season. Have a look, there's something for everyone!



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***

This meeting began with a Resource Worker from Children Services at Family and Children's Services (FACS). She explained that three years ago, FACS realized that many of the children and youth they serve have Indigenous ancestry. Since 2018, FACS has been restructuring to be more responsive to the cultural needs of the populations they are serving. This has resulted in two specialized teams being created. One is the Harambe Team which serves Black and African Caribbean families and youth. The other is the Trust-Two Row Understanding Service Team, which serves Indigenous people. This is based on the original treaty made between Dutch settlers and Indigenous peoples. They are committed to the principals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and are involved in all stages of the care process. One very important tenant of this is that they no long support placement for adoption with non-Indigenous families.

On the team, there are two educational consultants, one for the Public Board and one for the Catholic board, who are meant to represent children who are Indigenous and have exceptionalities.

There was also a discussion of how important it is to have people who are trauma informed on the team. Trauma can have a huge impact and children who experience trauma are often diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. Other issues that were discussed included the fact that the dominant societal way of doing things, including assessments, often do not work for Indigenous children.

The Board is also learning about Jordan's Principle, which requires Indigenous children access to services immediately when they are needed, with the government of first contact paying for them. The Board is doing its best to hire Indigenous workers. However, it has been hard to bring on someone with an Indigenous way of knowing because trust still needs to be built between Indigenous people and those currently doing the work and the system that is currently in place.

There was also discussion of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) being based on strengths and non-clinical assessments. Additionally, there was talk about how curriculum needs to be less about grade level and more based on strengths.

The next SEAC meeting will be on Wednesday, December 8, 2021.

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Special Education Advisory Committee Update

Submitted by Sue Simpson & Karen Kovats

At our November meeting we welcomed Terri Picket, Senior Manager of Facility Services, to speak about the previous year's/ongoing construction and upgrades to our schools. Terri reviewed the different streams of funding that the board was approved for and some of the projects that were undertaken. For example, the board was approved for 22 HVAC projects, 19 portable replacements, 12 window replacements, eight automatic door projects and a variety of other updates. With COVID-19 still a big concern, we know how important good quality air ventilation is and those improvements were set as high priority.

Terri also touched on some of the improvements to accessibility in our schools. These projects included the installation of elevators, change of door hardware and renovations to washrooms.

The review of the Special Education Plan continued with the review of four additional sections and input was given for consideration.

Association updates were shared. Trustee updates were also shared. Trustee Updates can be found here. <https://www.wcdsb.ca/wcdsb-board-meeting-bulletin-november-2021/>

WCDSB SEAC will meet again, virtually, on December 1.

We Choose You

By: Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator

As the holiday season approaches this year, I have been thinking a lot about “chosen family.” I know this is an important concept in the queer community, as you can see in **this video** from Spectrum Waterloo. One person in this video says that chosen family “don’t have to love you, but they do.”

To be honest, I have been turning that sentiment over in my mind ever since I was a little girl. My childhood best friend had aunts and uncles who were not related to her. I did, too actually, but the idea was a bit more lighthearted in my family. Either way, I just loved the idea that people could choose to commit to each other, could decide that someone was worth investing in, instead of being obligated. I think for people and families with exceptionalities, being chosen, being declared as precious for who you are means everything, even if you are fortunate enough to have a fabulous biological family.

So, in case you need to hear it this holiday and every day, we at WRFN think that you/your family members are precious, wonderful, worth getting to know, and you are part of our family and community. We choose you.



What's Happening at WRFN

All WRFN programs will be offered in virtual format or through phone and email connections until further notice. At WRFN, we're here to listen. Please reach out and let us know how we can help you and your family during these challenging times.



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.

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



NOVEMBER 2, 2021

Special Guest & Parent Activist, Al Etmanski, to hear what he has to say about strengthening & boosting the voices of parents and caregivers.

DECEMBER 7, 2021

Intuitive Painting: A peaceful break from your busy life - with Rachel & Wendy from Stepping Stones Expressive Arts

JANUARY 4, 2022

Completing the Puzzle: Consider the missing pieces in your loved one's future plan.

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

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

What's Happening at WRFN

A dark blue rectangular graphic with white text and illustrations. At the top, the words "Save the Dates" are written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, the text "Virtual Camp Fair 2022" is centered. To the right of the text is a white line-art illustration of a tent and a tree. Several white five-pointed stars are scattered around the text and illustration. On the left side, three dates are listed in white text: "Monday January 10th 2022, 7pm - Overnight camp", "Monday January 24th 2022, 7pm - Day camps for children", and "Monday February 28th 2022, 7pm - Day camps, day programs, and getaways for teens and adults". At the bottom left, there is a line of text: "Join us, and get started with plans for your happy camper." At the bottom right, there are two logos: "KidsAbility" with a colorful butterfly icon and "Waterloo Region Family Network" with an orange sun and people icon.

Save the Dates

Virtual Camp Fair 2022

Monday January 10th 2022, 7pm - Overnight camp

Monday January 24th 2022, 7pm - Day camps for children

Monday February 28th 2022, 7pm - Day camps, day programs, and getaways for teens and adults

Join us, and get started with plans for your happy camper.

KidsAbility™

WATERLOO REGION Family Network

In partnership with KidsAbility, WRFN is hosting another Virtual Camp Fair for the 2022 year. We will be showcasing summer camps, programs and/or getaways for children, youth and adults with exceptionalities. All camps and programs presented will be those that are specialized for campers with exceptionalities, or they are welcoming, inclusive, and supportive for all children.

All three sessions will take place virtually on Zoom. More information to come as we get closer to the dates. Registration to follow.

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.

To request a booking please complete the [request form](#).

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.

For more information, please contact [Sue.Simpson at Sue.simpson@wrfn.info](mailto:Sue.Simpson@wrfn.info).

WRFN's Family Resource Coach

During this current COVID-19 health crisis, personal support has become paramount for many families. Erin Sutherland and Sue Furey, our Family Resource Coaches, are available 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 virtual opportunities.

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

Call Sue at 226-898-9301 or email Sue.Furey@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. 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.

Steph's Corner

Holiday Traditions

The Holiday Season is almost here! Do you have any Holiday traditions? Are there things that you like to do at this time of year?

These are some things that I look forward to:

- Every year since we were little, my Aunt Heather and Uncle Dieter give my sister and me a chocolate advent calendar. I like having chocolate every morning when I wake up 😊.
- Our friends take us out for dinner at Swiss Chalet and we have the Festive Special. I have missed doing this during Covid.
- A big part of the holidays is being together with my family and friends.
- I like to bake to get ready for the holidays. We make sugar cookie dough and cut it into shapes. After the cookies are baked, my sister and I get to ice and decorate them. This is the best part because I get to test the icing.
- Our family always decorates our tree together. We play Christmas CDs. My sister Beth and I like to make dried orange slice decorations.
- I always get to put up the manger scene on top of the fireplace. Setting up the manger makes it feel like Christmas to me.
- On Christmas Eve, we go to church and after church we drive around to see the Christmas lights. We also pick up hot chocolate at Starbucks because it is the only place open.

I like having traditions because then I have lots of good memories of family and friends. It is fun to start new traditions too. Last year my friends, Susan and Karen, took my sister and me to see the lights at Bingeman's. They were great! This year I get to go again with my other friends, Alison and Rachel. I think that I would like this to be another tradition for me during the Holiday Season. Will you start any new traditions?

The Holiday Season is not always a happy time for everyone. It is good to remember that some people find the Holiday Season a hard time of the year. What can we do for them? We could send them a card, make a gift, buy them a gift card or donate food to the Food Bank. We could also donate money to organizations like WRFN who help us and make our community a better place.

Wishing you all the best during the Holiday Season and the coming year.



Steph Prysnuik

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.

Events

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region

2021 marks Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region's 40th anniversary and there is lots to celebrate! Join them for Bidding for Belonging virtual auction from November 24 to December 10 and celebrate 40 years of service to the community and raise funds for EAFWR's 40th Anniversary Fund.

With these funds, EAFWR will make a special legacy contribution to the community by educating, informing and creating awareness around disability. Books for Belonging will ensure books about disability and books written by authors with a disability can be found in Little Libraries throughout Waterloo Region.

Then, mark your calendars for December 3 at 7pm for the 40th Anniversary Virtual Celebration! During the interactive virtual celebration, you will view the premiere of the EAFWR film, see messages from staff, and learn about its history, present and dreams for the future. You'll also have a chance to win a gift basket for participating in EAFWR Trivia.

<https://bit.ly/2ZefEjU>

Protecting Children from Domestic Violence: It takes the whole community

On Monday December 6th from 1-2:30pm join psychologist and founding partner of Western's Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Peter Jaffe for this inaugural lecture on ending domestic violence. Peter will highlight the problem of domestic violence, discuss protecting children and provide responses on how we as a society can overcome this problem in our communities.

Register here: <https://mailchi.mp/uwo/peterjaffelectureseries?e=ce3e9bb2a5>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Programs & Recreation

Opportunities from Bridges to Belonging

Wills, Estates, Henson Trusts and Power of Attorney Event - B2B invites you to join with other families and caregivers in Waterloo Region on January 13, 2022 from 6:30-8:30 P. M. to learn from David Amy a local lawyer with Amy, Appleby and Brennan as he share valuable information and answers your questions about Wills, Estates, Henson Trusts and Power of Attorney and critical considerations to planning a safe and secure future for your loved ones with a disability. To learn more and register here: <https://bit.ly/FuturePlanningSeries2122> and keep an eye out for the future events!

BE-Connected — A place to virtually hangout, meet new people and talk about what's happening in your world.
Wednesday from 7:00-8:00pm | Use the following Zoom link to join:

BE-Friends Program — 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 gets 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.

To be matched with a Community Buddy register here: <https://bit.ly/3eWlrzh>
To Volunteer as Community Buddy register here: <https://bit.ly/3i1v69G>

ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections

Here at Friendly Connections, we are focused on helping our community, individuals of all ages with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, overcome isolation. We aim to help improve the well-being of individuals through socializing and providing entertaining resources.

We want to connect with individuals across Canada through phone calls, video calls, emailing, messenger chats and good old fashion mail. We mail letters, postcards, colouring sheets, activity sheets, stickers and other fun goodies!

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

KidsAbility Winter Recreation Programs

KidsAbility is having fun and keeping it safe this Winter with Recreation and Social Programs. They're committed to providing safe, inclusive and meaningful opportunities that will build your child's skills and confidence in group settings. There are also a few new offerings this year including:

- [Family Art Hangout](#)
- [Creative Expressions](#)
- [Express Yourself](#)

For more information on these programs, and a full list of all offerings, please visit <https://www.kidsability.ca/recreation-social-programs>.

Additionally, KidsAbility has opened up one-on-one sessions with their music therapists. For more information on this opportunity, please visit <https://www.kidsability.ca/music-therapy>.

Recreational Respite Virtual Services

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

<https://bit.ly/30TF1YF>

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://bit.ly/3906Lfl>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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 6:30pm.

Email Kim Sproul for more details at kim.sproul@eafwr.on.ca

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! We've got 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!

Torchlight Service: Connect Virtual Adult Programming

Torchlight's Connect Program offers a variety of fun interactive activities for a small membership fee. The Virtual Program team assists and supports participants in resolving technical issues, basic education on how to access online programs, program schedules and reminders via email.

Learn more about the Connect Membership at <https://bit.ly/3x0Sd9A>.

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>

Arts Abound

Arts Abound is excited to get back into the studio for fall classes. There are a variety of age groups and class types available. Please see their website for details:

artsabound.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Our Place KW - Family Resource and Early Years Centre

Our Place continues to offer a variety of programming opportunities.
Stork Secrets - Pregnancy and postpartum adjustment peer support.
Head over to <https://ourplacekw.ca/programs> for registration and information.

LEG Up! Holiday 2021 Classes

LEG Up! is a skill enhancement and learning experience you can enjoy from the comfort of your home or in person!

Self-Care for the Holidays (Virtual), 11 am-12 pm

The Holiday season can be stressful. Relieve stress so you can enjoy this time of year.

Holiday Baking (Virtual) Monday, 2-3 pm

Make and have all the best holiday treats for your celebrations.

Christmas Crafts (Virtual + in person), Tuesday, 11 am-12 pm

Range of class options for various holiday ornament making.

More Holiday Baking (Virtual), Tuesday, 4-5 pm

There's a class for every kind of sweet craving!

Holiday Crafts (In person), Wednesday, 11 am-12 pm

Sign up for the Holiday Crafts In-person course and create all these craft projects to use as decorations and gifts.

Holiday Music (Virtual), Wednesday, 2-3 pm

We will be ringing and singing at LEG Up! in this virtual session while exploring holiday favourites old and new.

Variety (Virtual), Thursday, 11am -12 pm

From trivia to scavenger hunts, there's something fun and new to try every week in this session.

Card Making (Virtual), Thursday, 2-3 pm

Make something special to send to someone you love this season!

Holiday Desserts, Friday 10:30-11:30 am

Add some yumminess to your week!

To sign up, or learn more, visit: shorturl.at/iEKN7

Information, Opportunities & Resources

EarlyON Waterloo Region

EarlyON provides a variety of developmentally appropriate, fun, and interactive learning opportunities for you and your child to explore together.

EarlyON Waterloo Region is offering both in-person and virtual programs.

Check their website earlyyearsinfo.ca for information about programs and new locations opening soon!

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): First, 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

Woolwich Sledge Hockey

Woolwich Sledge Hockey is open to any person with a physical disability, young or old! Learn more at: woolwichsledgehockey.com.

Kitchener Kicks Dragon Hearts

Kitchener Kicks Dragon Hearts program practices on Saturday mornings at 9am for individuals with special needs. Both virtual and in-person options are available.

New participants are welcome to try the program for free before signing up.

Visit <https://bit.ly/2XK5t5O> for more information.

DARE at Dance Adventures

DARE will be hosting in-person classes. DARE Jr. will run Thursday from 4:30-5:15pm.

The Teen/Young adult class will run Thursday from 5:15-6:00pm.

Learn more: <https://danceadventure.ca/registration/>.

Carousel Dance

Carousel Dance will be offering in-person classes this fall. Integrated and specialized dance programs are offered for children of all ages and abilities. The program focuses on adapted dance, creativity and social interaction in a fun and encouraging environment. Fall registration is closed, but Term 3 will start in February.

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/3i0aONr>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Woolwich Adapted Aquatics

Woolwich Adapted Aquatics will run on Fridays. A parent or caregiver must participate to support their swimmer in the water. Program offers a 1:3 ratio.

Visit: <https://bit.ly/3CDA3x6>

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/

Virtual Sensory Storytime

Join KPL for stories, games and songs during Sensory Storytime. Children of all ages and abilities are welcome.

Registration is required: <https://bit.ly/3odj8NZ>

Kijengle

Kijengle Inclusive Music Education & Music Therapy is an innovative, creative, family-centred organization. They will continue to offer both in-person and virtual music and music therapy programs. Learn more at: kijengle.ca.

Adults in Motion Life Skills Workshop

An intensive life-skills focused day. Four-week sessions.

Adults in Motion offers a number of in-person programs and virtual activities throughout the day. Enjoy personal connections, making new friendships and participating in entertaining activities.

To learn more, visit the Adults in Motion [website](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops & Training

The Breastfeeding Buddies Waterloo Region

Breastfeeding Buddies is hosting a series of different breastfeeding education events throughout the month of December.

They're also looking for volunteers of people who have breast/chest feeding experience, especially those who are bilingual or multilingual.

For more information on Breastfeeding Buddies' events, please visit:

<https://www.breastfeedingbuddies.com/neve-home/about-services/news-events/>

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)

December 2021 - Creating Your Individualized Housing and Support Plan
This three-session workshop series is designed to help you begin creating an individualized housing and support plan for you or a family member with a developmental disability. DATES: December 1st, 8th, and 15th 2021 6:00pm-8:30pm. NOTE: It is recommended you attend all three sessions as the content of each session is connected.

<https://conta.cc/3nloIMO>

Down Syndrome Research Foundation Educator Series

Please join DSRF speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and teachers for a webinar series designed to maximize successful participation in the classroom and community for learners with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

For more information, please email eleanor@DSRF.org.

Dec. 2 Visual-Motor Integration Skills: Impacts on Hand Writing and Reading Skills

Dec. 7 Sensory Processing: Impacts on School Routines

Dec. 9 Down to Sign in the Classroom: Impacts of Hearing and Audiology

[Click here to register now!](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Canadian Mental Health Association - Waterloo Wellington

Nurturing and supportive relationships are critical for children and youth to become healthy, resilient adults. On December 2 at 6:30 pm, Dr. Ungar will present on relationships, resilience and the ways they promote a powerful identity and a sense of belonging. They will share stories and concrete suggestions for parents and caregivers to support their children.

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

Safety for Independent Living

Passport Community Developers are hosting a number of virtual Safety for Independent Living sessions. This is a personal-safety course where people learn life skills that empower them to make safe choices and caring and respectful decisions in their everyday lives both online and offline.

December 6-10, 10:00-12:00pm

Location: Virtually (Zoom) Cost: \$55 — Passport funding admissible

Contact Amanda Paradis, Waterloo Passport Community Developer to register
aparadis@cwsds.ca

Lutherwood - Modern Approach to Interviews

Tuesday, December 7 at 1-2 pm.

Nervous about what to say in an interview? Join Lutherwood to learn about the types of interviews employers are conducting, and how to prepare yourself to answer questions effectively.

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

Halton Sexual Confidence Workshop

This workshop provides opportunities to discuss sexuality in an open, light-hearted way using visual, tactile and interactive learning strategies. It will foster communication about sexuality and relationships between adults with a developmental disability and the people who support them, all while providing tangible skills and materials to promote healthy sexuality.

Upcoming Dates:

Tuesdays: January 11 to February 15, 2022; 2:30 — 3:30pm

To register or for more information contact Kelsey at 905-510-3852 or
kgillian@cwsds.ca

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Ontario Independent Facilitation Network

OIFN is pleased to announce 3 upcoming Building Capacity in Independent Facilitation OIFN Shared Learning Events:

- December 7 & 9, 2021: The Power of Leisure Identities and Valued Social Roles
- January 18 & 19, 2022: The Power of Possibility: Who I am and Why I Do What I Do
- March 1 & 3, 2022: Conscious Listening and Speaking

OIFN believes in learning together and sees people, along with the support of their loved ones, as the directors of their lives.

Please know that, where costs would stop someone from participating, OIFN has some bursaries available for people, family members, and/or loved ones, and independent facilitators. There is a link to the Bursary Request Form on the flyer.

If you have any questions, please contact Bill Rollo, OIFN Administrative Assistant, at 519-966-8094 or broлло@oifn.ca.

<https://tinyurl.com/OIFNSharedLearning21-22>

YMCA

The YMCA Youth Cannabis Awareness Program (YCAP) is pleased to invite you to attend our newest online presentation, "Cannabis and the Adolescent Brain." December 15th, 2021 at 1:00 - 2:00PM EST.

The human brain continues to develop until the age of 25. During adolescence, youth learn about the world and discover who they are as their brains mature. Risky behaviors such as using cannabis can have harmful effects on a developing brain when use (regular and heavy use) begins in adolescence.

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hE4rf4pTsmHUI9uKFDO2Q

Strong Minds Strong Kids

Kids Have Stress Too! is a program to teach you, parents and caregivers, how to support your loved one in identifying and managing their stress, while working toward a resilient future. And because children experience different stressors at different points in their lives, sessions are divided by age groups.

Learn more and register to our upcoming trainings here <https://conta.cc/39tQAag>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Resources

Family Alliance Ontario

In the latest guide you will find:

- Co-existing with COVID - Hello Vaccines
- Getting Back out There
- Staying Mentally Healthy
- Staying Physically Healthy
- Putting it all Together: Focussing on the Life You Want
- More Resources for Staying Healthy and Connected During COVID

Action Guide 1. Moving Beyond the Pandemic

NEW Action Guide 2. Staying Healthy and Motivated

UPCOMING ACTION GUIDES

December 1: Exploring Opportunities to Get Involved

December 15: Building Supportive Networks

<https://www.planningnetwork.ca/resources/managing-the-new-normal-staying-healthy-motivated>

Resources from Inclusion Canada

Pathways to Home Ownership — The Pathways to Homeownership outlines an inclusive model of homeownership and provides solutions to the problems faced by people with intellectual disabilities when buying their own house as well as resources to navigate the process.

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/3B4n0E2>.

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 | jjdigirolamo@ccrw.org

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

The Family Support Network for Employment

FSNE is proud to announce the launch of the “Learning Path to Employment,” an online course designed for families of individuals with a developmental disability. The goal of the course is to provide individuals and their families with the knowledge and tools they need to advocate for, and secure, meaningful paid employment. The course can be found here: <https://fsne.ca/courses/learning-path-to-employment/>. The course can be accessed 24/7, is free, and there is no time limit in which you must complete it.

Letter Campaign for Inclusion Action Ontario

In November, IAO submitted its comments on the draft K-12 standards under AODA. You can see these comments in the link below.

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

Ontario Disability Coalition

Letter and Brief from Ontario Disability Coalition addressing the shortage of nurses.

Letter: <https://bit.ly/3HTFYkP>

Brief: <https://bit.ly/3nOOhqd>

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 you get you set up.

To learn more visit shorturl.at/yEGK3.

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](https://www.take5.ca).

Shared Connections

Inclusive and Accessible Tech Support

Shared Connections can help you get connected, finding & adapting technologies to meet your unique needs. Shared Connections is a non-profit committed to inclusion for people with multiple disabilities.

www.sharedconnections.ca

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

KidsAbility Resources

Foundational Family Supports — KidsAbility provides Foundational Family Services to anyone in the community — no diagnosis needed. Staff will work with you to find workshops, resources, groups, support and more to help you be successful. You do not need to be a KidsAbility family to access these services. Learn more about this support at <https://kidsability.ca/foundational-services>.

Transition to Adulthood Clinic (for KidsAbility clients 15+) — Have you started to think about your life after high school? Do you have questions about services for adults with disabilities in the community? The Transition to Adulthood Clinic is an opportunity to meet with the Transitions Lead who will help to guide you in the right direction with planning for your future. Find information about the Transition to Adulthood Clinic at <https://kidsability.ca/transition-adulthood-clinic>.

ConnectAbility.ca COVID-19 Resources

Supporting individuals, families and caregivers

Find answers to your COVID-19 questions, share experiences and discover events to stay active and connected. Visit <https://connectability.ca/covid-19/>

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>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

The FASD Ontario Website Has a New Look!

Key features of the new FASD Ontario website include: enhanced design, improved navigation, upgraded search functionality

www.FASDON.ca

The Ontario Caregiver Organization

Resources and Education Opportunities to Help Caregivers When They Need it Most.

[Learn more here](#)

Ontario Further Extending Temporary Wage Increase for Personal Support Workers

The Ontario government is investing an additional \$373 million to extend the temporary wage enhancement for personal support workers and direct support workers. This increase will continue until March 31, 2022 and will help attract and retain workers in these critical sectors to protect Ontario's progress while continuing to take a cautious and careful approach to reopening. This latest temporary wage increase builds on the government's previous wage enhancement extension on August 23, 2021, which was set to expire on October 31, 2021.

For more information, visit <http://ow.ly/Pnky50GEIcM>

CNIB Scholarships & Awards

Every year, CNIB's scholarship program awards multiple scholarships, bursaries and other awards to people who are blind or partially sighted in recognition of their educational aspirations and achievements.

Click [here](#) to learn more about these opportunities and to apply.

Safe Voluntary Isolation Site

A safe place for you to stay to help you rest and recover, and to reduce the spread of COVID-19 within your home and in the community. There are no costs to you.

To learn more visit: regionofwaterloo.ca/IsolationSite

Email: safeisolation@regionofwaterloo.ca

Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities — How to Stay Safe, Well and Connected

There is lots of talk right now about COVID-19 or the Coronavirus. We may come across lots of information out there, but it is not always easy to understand and it can be confusing. This page has resources from around the world and information to support people with developmental disabilities and their families during this time.

<https://bit.ly/3hWruX8>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Support Groups

Transgender Partners and Friends Peer Support Group

The Partners, Family and Friends of Transgender Folks Peer Support Group is a support group for non-transgender folks in the orbit of transgender folks where they can discuss their challenges and build community and solutions. Participants are welcome to share or simply listen and learn from the experiences and perspectives of others. The group meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Please request access information by emailing trans@ourspectrum.com.

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/>

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County Virtual Peer Support Network

Are your kids staying engaged with online learning? Are you looking for ideas to keep them (and yourself) motivated?

Join the Peer Support Network and meet other parents on a similar journey to yours. LDAWC peer support network's goal is to provide an informal setting to share experiences, challenges, successes and resources.

This group takes place the second Monday of the month from 7:00-8:30pm

Learn more on their [website](#).

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.

Contact Steve Keczem at 519-888-1053 or go to apsgo.ca for more information.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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 and Our Place Family Resource and 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.cpbf-fbpc.org/covid19>

Ontario-Wide Virtual Support Group for Black parents and caregivers

The Black Parents of Children and Adults with a Disability 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.

Location/Meetings: 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. You can also find them on Facebook @BPSG: Black Parents of Children and Adults with a Disability Support Group

Chronic Pain Monthly Support Group

This group is focused on discussing chronic pain coping strategies and how you can apply them in your life. Short mindfulness exercises will be included. Led by a facilitator who has experience with chronic pain. People can register anytime. Contact intaketeam@carizon.ca for more information or to register.

Parents for Children's Mental Health Virtual Peer Support Group

Family/Caregiver Support Group

The fourth Tuesday of each month from 7-8:30pm

ADHD Caregiver Support Group

The third Wednesday of each month from 7-9pm

Group information is available by emailing waterloo@pcmh.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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!

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

Come join our Parent Support Group and meet other parents on a similar journey to yours. LDAWC parent support group's goal is to provide an informal setting to share experiences, challenges, successes and resources. Living, learning and/or working with a LD, or supporting a family member with LD, has its ups and downs. Come learn from others.

Benefits are:

- Learning about relevant resources, supports and strategies
- Insights into what has and hasn't worked for parents and families
- Learning you and your student aren't alone through shared ideas and experiences
- Reduced stigma and stress

Register for Free.

Super Dads Super Kids

This is an online group for dads with children ages 0-6. Join the group to talk about what you think it means to be a dad. Learn ways to connect with your child.

Participate in fun activities with your child(ren)

Starts: Sept. 21, 2021 When: Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30pm Where: Zoom

Contact Roberto at capc@carizon.ca to register or for more information.

Groups from Muslim Social Services

Resilient Girls — Building young girls' resilience, self-esteem, networking skills and know how about family dynamics during COVID-19 related uncertain times. Ages 13-18.

Contact counsellor@muslimsocialserviceskw.org or call 519-772-4399 x 2707.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

Respect Survey

Very little information is known on the treatment of pregnant people while receiving care in Canada. Therefore, The Canadian Institute of Health with the Birth Place Lab at UBC created the Respect Survey. The survey is anonymous and open to anyone who was pregnant in Canada in the last 10 years. It is also available in eight languages. The survey will **remain open until December 31, 2021**.

For more information on the RESPCCT Survey, the researchers, and to take the survey, please visit: <https://www.respcct.ca/>

COVID-19 and Down syndrome: Vaccine Response Survey

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society needs your help! More needs to be learned about COVID-19 and the related vaccine among people with Down syndrome. The Trisomy 21 Research Society (T21RS) has organized an international online survey to collect this information.

You are invited to complete this survey if you are a caregiver of a person with Down syndrome who has received the COVID-19 vaccine or who is eligible but does not plan to receive the vaccine.

<https://bit.ly/388Fxmc>

Elmira District Community Living

As part of the Elmira District Community Living strategic plan to transform day supports, they are seeking input from potential, future participants who live within their catchment area. Any feedback is appreciated. No identifiable information will be shared unless you choose to provide them with your contact information at the end of the survey.

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Participate in Online Emotion Research

This online study is looking at the emotional life of adolescents 12-18 with ASD, ADHD, 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. If you are interested contact asd@queensu.ca.

Better Nights, Better Days

Better Nights, Better Days are recruiting 1,000 families of children who experience sleeping problems to test the program during COVID-19 program across Canada. There is no cost for families to participate. Study recruitment will continue until December 2021. The study has been approved by the IWK Research Ethics Board. If you would like more information, please visit our website <https://betternightsbetterdays.ca/> or email us at bnbd@dal.ca.

CAMH Virtual Healthcare Study for Patients with Developmental Disabilities

During COVID-19 there has been a huge increase in the delivery of virtual primary care. CAMH is conducting interviews (online or by phone) to learn what is working well and what needs to be improved to support high quality care for patients with developmental disabilities.

Interested or want to learn more?

Contact Avra Selick at avra.selick@camh.ca or 416-535-8501x30127

Advocacy Kit for Increasing Special Services at Home

People for Personalized Funding (PFPP) has created an advocacy kit for increasing Special Services at Home.

[Bulletin from PFPP about Special Services at Home](#)
[How to Take Action](#)

Survey: Use of Services for 0-6 Children by Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMHP) at the Hospital for Sick Children, in collaboration with the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (The Centre), Kids Brain Health Network (KBHN) and Children First would like to hear your thoughts about how our child and youth mental health system can improve the quality of services for children under 6 throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learn more at <https://bit.ly/39fKVFe>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Community News

Sunbeam Children's Overnight Respite

On December 1, Sunbeam's overnight respite program (formerly known as Kids Country Club) will be re-opening! In the following memo, you will find:

- Memo of the Re-opening of Sunbeam Kids Hub – (link to our 2020-2021 annual report)
- Bulletin about Respite Program COVID-19 Vaccination or PCR Testing Requirement
- Short Break Profile Form

<https://wrfn.info/userContent/documents/Kids%20Hub-Sunbeam.pdf>

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region

Extend-A-Family is in urgent need of homes for its FamilyHome program which places people with exceptionalities in need of housing with a family sponsor. Providing a caring, stable home environment that promotes acceptance, a focus on dignity, and helping to create belonging are the foundations of FamilyHome.

<https://www.eafwr.on.ca/programs/familyhome/>

Significant Victory for Individuals with Exceptionalities in Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia Court of Appeal has begun to address the human rights of Nova Scotians with disabilities who live in institutions or in community without support. This ruling sent a powerful message that there are fundamental systemic barriers in Nova Scotia that deny equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities.

Learn More [here](#).