

*Where exceptional families thrive*

**Issue 151**  
**November 2022**

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## What's In This Issue?

Somehow, we're already closing in on the end of the year, but we are not slowing down at WRFN! As you'll see in our What's Happening at WRFN section, there's a ton of fun, new stuff going on.

We are introducing not one, but TWO additional Family Resources Coaches to help Erin support families in Waterloo Region, we are once again hosting a Family Activity Day event, and as we approach giving season we are hosting an online auction. It is a busy month, but that also gives us many more opportunities to connect with you, and we cannot wait!

Read through this month's Family Pulse to see what other programs, events, webinars, engagement opportunities, and more are coming up in the community this month.



**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 meeting, there was discussion of what to do in a classroom of students who are medically fragile when teachers are absent. The plan is to have a supply teacher from another place in the school come in who already knows the students and their needs. A classroom that has implemented this is trying the plan out slowly, putting nurses with students who are the most medically fragile. Staff are also wearing masks around the students.

The Board recognizes there are still issues with transportation and is working hard to fix them. There are also staff shortages. In terms of IEPs, accommodations are happening and teachers are still connecting with families, but there is some paperwork not being given out because staff do not have access to the system because of the cyber attack.

For the Right to Read strategy, there are 38 Reading Resource teachers across the system, who are focusing on structured literacy. There are also teachers focusing on Empower. These teachers are working directly with students while also helping teachers learn what they need to know about the program. There are committees for areas of Right to Read as well as a steering committee that includes Scott Miller, the Associate Director of Education, System Administrators, research consultants, leads in the psychology departments, and Speech and Language pathologists.

The next SEAC meeting will take place on **November 9, 2022**.

## SEAC Updates

**Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Special Education Advisory Committee Update**  
***Submitted by Sue Simpson & Karen Applebee***

On October 5, WCDSB SEAC met through a hybrid format of in person and virtual. Tee Battistella, Senior Manager, Learning Services – Student Services shared a presentation on Special Education Support, Resources and Self-Regulation. Part of the presentation highlighted the different roles of the EA, Classroom Teacher and Special Education Teacher and how they work together for the students.

Gerald Foran, Superintendent of Learning responsible for Special Education presented on Summer Programming.

Association updates were shared.

Trustees Jeanne Gravelle and Tracey Weiler shared updates from the September Trustee meeting. Those updates can be found here

<https://www.wcdsb.ca/2022/09/>

The next SEAC meeting will be November 2 offered in hybrid format.

## The Nuances of Moving House when Neurodivergent

Cristina Stanger, Self-Advocacy Liaison

My August Family Pulse article focused on giving myself grace amidst change. A lot of the change I was experiencing stemmed from moving house, something I had not done on a large scale before. And while every neurodivergent person is different, I thought I would share my experiences, what worked well and what didn't, to give you information to consider if you need to move, or need to support a loved one through the moving process.

### ***Preparing to say goodbye and hello***

As I read through articles about how to prepare children for a move, I quickly realised that many of the recommendations would benefit my own transition period as well. My family said goodbye and thank you to our old house, going from room to room, writing down memories as we went. We visited parks and places near our new house to build our comfort level with the new neighbourhood. My family and I did a collaborative art project together during our first days in the new house, creating something we could hang on the wall to commemorate our family's arrival.

Something I would have liked to manage better was the social element, saying goodbye to old neighbours and hello to the new ones; these gestures of closure or introduction didn't come to fruition in the way I would have liked, mostly because they occurred to me as an afterthought and I didn't prepare myself enough in advance for these interpersonal tasks.

### ***Making the new space work for us***

There is no way around it, moving is a process, a process which requires a good deal of effort and organisation. My family decided in advance to get help with the organisational element in our new home, focusing on our kitchen and basement. By ensuring things were unpacked, sorted and given a 'home' early on by someone without an emotional attachment, it significantly reduced the environmental chaos, which in turn significantly reduced my sensory overwhelm. The decluttering and decision making element involved with the organisation was draining and required some recovery time, but was well worth it in the end.

While it took some back and forth within my internal dialogue, I decided to arrange our furniture to suit my family's needs, rather than meet conventional norms. For example, we placed large shelving units in my dining room for storage, as we use that space to craft or play games as opposed to entertaining. Our space, our own way to use it.

### ***Managing the emotional elements***

I knew moving would be hard as it is a big change, but I underestimated the sheer amount of stress involved (buying, selling, planning, etc.). The element of stress made life more challenging because stress impacts my neurodivergent symptoms, and my ability to deal with aspects of day-to-day life was reduced. This is something I failed to anticipate, though it seems an obvious issue in hindsight. Once I came to this realisation, I had to be deliberate in building in extra downtime into my schedule to allow for recovery. Grace was involved, once again, as I reduced my goals for each day and cut myself more slack for parenting missteps.

We discovered that different family members experienced different emotions at different times during the moving process; which again, sounds obvious, but didn't occur to me as something to prepare for. Being gentle with each other and openly communicating went a long way in this regard.

I had a hard time navigating the social niceties that came with news of moving. Most people would talk about how exciting it all was, but these small-talk conversations left little room to express how I was really feeling (worried about change, overwhelmed with stress, etc). I often had to gloss over all my true emotions, which was very draining. So instead I talked with trusted sources about these feelings, which is a strategy I had learned already, but that I had to remind myself to use.

### ***Other important things I learned:***

- Adjustments to one's muscle memory are required when living in a new space. The recalibration of various movements and actions can be exhausting! Take some downtime and remember this process can take several weeks (approximately 8 in my case).
- You might discover new quirks in your home that can be disappointing at first. However, over time the reasons you picked your living space will begin to shine through again.
- It takes a while for a house to feel like it's really yours. Slowly, you will develop new cleaning routines and figure out where to put seasonal decor to help make your new space feel more like your home.
- Don't forget to modify your travel planning when leaving your house for the day, including the length of transit time in addition to the route itself.

### ***In conclusion***

I share these experiences not to scare or deter anyone from moving, but to give you things to think about —because the more I know what I might need to expect, the easier my transitions are as I get fewer surprises and I can prepare for anticipated challenges. If you are going to be moving, I wish you the best and please don't worry if you, like me, do not feel excited. We all process things differently, and you will adjust in time.

# What's Happening at WRFN

At this time, most WRFN programs are being offered through a virtual format or through phone and email connections. We are slowly transitioning into some programs and services being available in person. However, we understand that these remain to be challenging times for many. Please reach out and let us know how we can help you and your family.

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

## WRFN Drop-Ins at EarlyON

**Meet with Erin, our Family Resource Coach**

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

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Nov 8	EarlyON   Riverside 250 William St., Elmira	9:30-11 am
Nov 9	EarlyON   Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
Nov 15	EarlyON   Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am
Nov 16	EarlyON   Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am



**Contact Erin -**  
erin.sutherland@wrfn.info  
226-808-5460

**More dates to come in December!**

www.wrfn.info





## Exciting Family Resource Coach News!

In October, WRFN was able to bring TWO new Family Resource Coaches onto the team to help Erin support families in the region. The first Family Resource Coach is someone you may recognize from the WRFN team. Leah, WRFN's previous Administrative Assistant, brings 23 years of experience with non-profit organizations in various social service settings the majority of which has been in the Developmental Services sector.

Joining Leah is Marla Pender who will be working 10 hours a week as an FRC with us. Marla comes to WRFN with 16 years of experience working at the City of Kitchener in various capacities and 10 years of experience working with individuals and families with exceptional needs in our community. Both Leah and Marla bring many talents, gifts and experience to their new roles.

# WRFN Family Activity Day

WRFN and Scotiabank present:

## WRFN'S FAMILY ACTIVITY DAY

in celebration of World Children's Day

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20**

**2 PM - 4 PM**



**Register Today!**



We're so excited to officially invite you to our Family Activity Day event in celebration of World Children's Day! Our families are invited to join us for an afternoon of fun at Doon Heritage Village and Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum.

The Doon Heritage Village and museum exhibits will be free for you to explore with your family on Sunday, November 20 from 2 to 4 pm. While the museum is open to the public this day, our guests will have private access to the heritage village. We will have a room available for those who may need a calm and quiet space to take a break or warm up in after being in the village.

**[Register Here Now!](#)**

The Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum has two all-terrain wheelchairs available to borrow. They can be provided to the first two families who reach out (one has currently been spoken for). You can reach out in advance with any other accommodation questions and/or requests and we will do our best to provide them. Please let us know if there are any allergies we should also be aware of.

Accessibility maps of the village and museum are also available in advance. Please connect with us at [info@wrfn.info](mailto:info@wrfn.info) to let us know how we can support you.

## Save the Date: Celebrate Family Charity Auction

**Celebrate Family**  
Online Fundraising Auction

**November 21 - 27**

A great selection of items  
will be available thanks  
to our amazing local  
businesses and donors!

*Link Coming Soon!*

WATERLOO REGION  
**Family Network**

Our online charity auction, Celebrate Family, will be returning again this year! We can't wait to share the incredible lineup of items we have for you to bid on, thanks to generous donations made by local businesses. Keep an eye on your inbox or our social media pages in the coming weeks for more information.





## 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.



**November 1,  
2022**

with **Becki Pauls**  
from Planned Lifetime  
Advocacy Network (PLAN)

This month, we will be discussing

- *Components of a Good Life:*

What are the things to consider as we work alongside our kids and their supporters to help them build a "good life".

- *The Canada Disability Benefit*

The CDB has just gone through its second reading in parliament. Becki will give us an update on the next steps and any new information about it.

- *Connection with PLAN*

Becki will address ways, we here in Southwestern Ontario, can stay connected with PLAN, its work and existing advocacy networks to ensure that we are aware and that we use our voices effectively.

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

At our November 1 meeting, we'll welcome back Becki Pauls from Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN). Becki is a busy woman who has her eye on many things that we as parents and caregivers are interested in and so we have asked her to address three main areas:

1. Components of a Good Life: What are the things to consider as we work alongside our kids and their supporters to help them build a "good life." Whether we have been thinking and working towards this for years, or are new to this conversation, there will be something helpful for all of us. Consider this the nuts and bolts of future planning.
2. The Canada Disability Benefit has just gone through its second reading in parliament. Becki, will give us an update on the next steps and any new information she has on the CDB.
3. Lastly, we have asked Becki to address ways in which we here in Southwestern Ontario can stay connected with PLAN, its work and existing advocacy networks to ensure that we are aware and that we use our voices effectively.

Join us online on Tuesday, November 1 from 7:30-9 pm. Please email Mary Pike ([maryjpik@hotmail.com](mailto:maryjpik@hotmail.com)) to RSVP for this meeting and she will send you the link.

# What's Happening at WRFN

## Ask A Self-Advocate

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

For more information on Ask A Self-Advocate please contact Cristina Stanger at [Cristina.Stanger@wrfn.info](mailto:Cristina.Stanger@wrfn.info).

## Parent Mentor Program

Through our Parent Mentor Program, we provide a means for parents to connect with each other, as well as guide, support and help empower each other to work through the highs and lows that make up their journeys.

Our Parent Mentors provide information and emotional support; share ideas and strategies; and connect their mentees with community resources.

Learn more about our Parent Mentor Program [here](#).

## School-Issue Parent Support Group

This peer-led group provides support, advice and a safe environment for parents who have questions or concerns about school issues affecting their children with special needs. The WRFN School Issues Support Group meets on the last Wednesday of each month during the school year. The next regular meeting will take place November 30.

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

## Family Resource Coach

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

Call Erin Sutherland at 226-808-5460 or email [Erin.Sutherland@wrfn.info](mailto:Erin.Sutherland@wrfn.info).

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

Email Marla Pender at [Marla.Pender@wrfn.info](mailto:Marla.Pender@wrfn.info).

## Coffee Club

Greetings from Coffee Club! We currently meet on Zoom, usually on Thursdays from 3:00-4:00 PM. Generally, we are just catching up and chatting, mixed with a little bit of watching YouTube.

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

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

### Programs & Recreation

#### Carizon Programs

*Newcomer Mental Health Program (NMHP)*

The Newcomer Mental Health Program provides services to newcomer refugee persons in the Waterloo Region with GAR, PSR or Protected Persons status.

*Community Resource Program (CRP)*

The Community Resource Program (also known as CRP) provides services to families in the Waterloo Region with children ages 4-17 years.

*Children and Parents Connecting (CAPC)*

The Children and Parents Connecting program (also known as CAP-C) provides services to families in the Waterloo Region with children between the ages of 0-6.

*Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)*

The Canadian Prenatal Nutrition (also known as CPNP) provides services to pregnant women and their support persons in the Waterloo Region.

*Financial Wellness*

The Financial Wellness program provides support to individuals and families in the Waterloo Region seeking support in managing finances.

*Pathways to Education*

The Pathways to Education program provides supports like tutoring, groups, and scholarships (and more!) to youth in grades 8-12 living in the Kingsdale and Chandler–Mowat communities.

**[Carizon Community Services - Current and Upcoming Free Programming](#)**

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### Let's Talk Positive Parenting "Snap Shot" Series

*Discipline or Punishment* – Thursday, November 10, 8 – 9 pm - This presentation looks at the impact of both discipline and punishment on the behaviour of children and teens and helps you to understand the difference between the two.

*Parenting Your Teen* – Tuesday, November 22, 7 –8 pm - This snapshot focuses on how we can build and strengthen our relationships with our pre-teen or teenaged children & specific strategies to keep those lines of communication open.

To register for programs or to get more information, email: [parenting@kwcounselling.com](mailto:parenting@kwcounselling.com)

### YMCA of Three Rivers

**YMCA of Three Rivers** is offering a FREE seven-week mental wellness program for people ages 13-18 (Teen). **"Y Mind"** is delivered by the YMCA of Three Rivers and community partners. Y Mind participants learn evidence-based coping skills based on Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT), mindfulness, and self-compassion, and connect with peers who are experiencing similar thoughts and feelings.

### Woolwich Counselling

**Woolwich Counselling Centre** has a variety of in-person and virtual small-group therapy sessions and workshops for children, youth, adults, and seniors coming in November. Sessions include the following topics: Boundary and Assertiveness Skill-Building 101, Mindfulness (adults), Conquering Teen Anxiety, and more. To register, please call 519-669-8651 or email us at [info@woolwichcounselling.org](mailto:info@woolwichcounselling.org).

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

### Infant Massage

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

Shawna will be offering one-on-one and group sessions in clients' homes. Fees are \$150 (about \$30 a week). Families can register for the program at

[www.kwinfantmassage.ca](http://www.kwinfantmassage.ca) and find out more information as well. They can also email [shawna@kwinfantmassage.ca](mailto:shawna@kwinfantmassage.ca).

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### Siblings Canada: Savvy Siblings

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

### Monica Place

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

### Fun Fearless Females

There are a ton of great activities being hosted by Fun Fearless Females this month. If you're already in the holiday spirit, you can join the group for events like holiday shopping and holiday crafts. There will also be other fun get-togethers like a Name That Tune night and a Fear Factor Foods night. Check it all out at: **Events — Fun Fearless Females**

### Cambridge Career Connections - Youth Job Connection

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

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

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

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

### **Recreational Respite Virtual Services**

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

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

### **Sensory Workout**

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

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

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

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

### **Return of the Dragon**

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### Bridges to Belonging

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

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

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

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

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

### March of Dimes Connect & Share

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

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

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

### CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings

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

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **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](mailto:kim.sproul@eafwr.on.ca)

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

### **Strong Minds Strong Kids**

Kids Have Stress Too! Can help you support the social and emotional development of your child. There are different modules to take for different age groups.

- **[Preschool, Kindergarten, and Parent Training](#)**: November 18 12:30 pm-3 pm
- **[Grades 1-6 Training \(with Grades 1-3 Guide\)](#)**: November 18 12:30 pm-3 pm
- **[Grades 1-6 Training \(with Grades 4-6 Guide\)](#)**: November 18 12:30 pm-3 pm
- **[Stress Lessons Grades 7-12 \(with Grade 7-9 Guide\) Training](#)**: November 25 12:30 pm-3 pm
- **[Stress Lessons Grades 7-12 \(with Grade 9-12 Guide\) Training](#)**: November 25 12:30 pm-3 pm



# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Workshops & Training

### **Bridges to Belonging**

*Choice, Connection, and Community:* Bridges to Belonging is running another session of Choice, Connection and Community in November for seniors and older adults! This is a series of four in-person workshops supported by individualized facilitation for you to discover your gifts and strengths, connect them with your interests and passions and create a plan for social connection and belonging in community.

Upcoming Session: Wednesdays November 9 to November 30 2-4 pm, with a half-hour social at the end. Register here <https://forms.gle/RsezfVw7tfMra3b46> and contact spanchaud@bridgestobelonging.ca to learn more!

*LINKS workshops* are being adapted to include more one-to-one facilitation and mentorship. If you or your loved one identifies as having a disability, facilitators will be with you, shaping the life you want. Walking along with your own facilitator, meeting new people, finding resources in your neighborhood, uncovering opportunities: it's all about you and the life you want. To find out more information about LINKS workshops, email [info@bridgestobelonging.ca](mailto:info@bridgestobelonging.ca).

### **Safety For Independent Living**

A personal safety course where people learn life skills that empower them to make safe choices and caring & respectful decisions in their everyday lives both online and offline. During this course, you will learn basic first aid, fire safety and emergency vs. non-emergency scenarios, being assertive vs. bullying, people safety, getting help, tricky people and who safe strangers are, and online safety.

Date: November 14-18 at 1:30 -3 pm. On Zoom. Contact Kate Matos, Halton Passport Community Developer, at [kmatos@cwsds.ca](mailto:kmatos@cwsds.ca).

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Webinars & Events

### Partners for Planning (P4P)

*Future Planning With Siblings In Mind* - For adult siblings - November 2 at 7 pm - When considering the future for a child with a disability, many parents feel conflicted when thinking about the roles their other children may play. Learn how parents and adult siblings can come together to begin ongoing conversations on planning for a family member with a disability.

*Microboards: Sustaining Your Future* - For all ages - November 9 at 7 pm - In this webcast, Executive Director Karen Bell, from Microboards Ontario will introduce families to this innovative concept, and discuss things that families should consider when deciding if a Microboard is the right fit for them.

Register and learn more at <https://planningnetwork.ca/#freeonlinewebcasts>.

### Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)

Join DSO Housing Navigators on Thursday, November 10 at 6 pm for a virtual presentation on various types of technological assistance available today and how it might be used to support independence. While technology can never replace human connection, it can certainly help to increase independence thus decreasing the need (and expense) for human “just in case” supports.

[Technology to Support Independence](#)

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Resources

### Aide Canada

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

### Resources from Inclusion Canada

Pathways to Home Ownership — The Pathways to Homeownership project demonstrated inclusive models of homeownership and created resources to help people with disabilities (and their families) purchase their own homes. Inclusion Canada is currently working on new resources to support Pathways. It will be coming soon. Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/3B4n0E2>.

### 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 | [jdigirolamo@ccrw.org](mailto:jdigirolamo@ccrw.org)  
<https://www.ccrw.org/>

### March of Dimes Hi, Tech!

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

### Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT)

Children and Youth Planning Table has released the [3rd disaggregated Snapshot Report](#) from the Youth Impact Survey—Gender Identity. This snapshot contains the most differences to date amongst subpopulations. Please take a moment to review.

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Plexus**

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

Referrals can be made here: [Plexus Referral](#)

### **National Advisory Council on Poverty**

National Advisory Council on Poverty's 2022 report on the progress of Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy. The council interviewed 1000 people across the country about the underlying and overlapping causes and impacts of poverty and hosted 8 small group sessions where people with lived expertise of poverty could share their personal stories. They heard about the struggle, resilience, frustration, and perseverance that is poverty in Canada. Those conversations and the insights that the participants shared are the foundation of this report.

<https://bit.ly/3D15p2m>

### **Positive Behaviour Supports Corporation (PBS Corp.)**

PBS provides high quality Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy to children and adults diagnosed with Autism or other qualifying diagnosis and we have immediate availability in your area. Services are provided in the home, school and community settings. PBS will conduct an assessment in the home environment to determine the goals with the family which often include addressing challenging behaviours and increasing skills in a variety of areas that are targeted. ABA is implemented in real world situations with the parents being an integral part of ABA therapy.

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

### **Lutherwood**

Lutherwood provides support for those looking for meaningful employment in Waterloo Region. Link for job seekers [Let's Connect! - Lutherwood.](#)

## 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. While live sessions have passed, you can still watch all recordings online.
- *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](#).

### Family Compass Waterloo Region

Family Compass Waterloo Region is a central website to guide families to services for children, youth, and families in our community. The website offers the option to find information about general services for children and youth as well as specialized services that can help to address developmental concerns.

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

### Fostering Information from Family & Children Services

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

### 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 \(planningnetwork.ca\)](#)

## 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.

### **Take5**

Take5 is an online space for children and youth in foster care, in group homes, or living away from their parents in Ontario. On Take5 you can find information for your age on things like: coping with stress, stuff about your identity and culture, relationships, and who to ask for help. You can also find activities, podcasts, videos and online events. Take5 is for children 6 to 12 and youth 13 and above. Visit the [Take5 website](#).

### **The Royal Mental Health Care & Research**

The Royal Mental Health Care & Research is one of Canada’s foremost mental health care, teaching and research hospitals, located in Ottawa. The Institute of Mental Health Research, affiliated with the University of Ottawa, brings together leading mental health professionals, scientists, and technology to gain a deeper understanding of the brain, and investigate innovative approaches to preventing and treating mental illness. To learn about The Royal’s programs, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3dRvIo2>

### **The Vulnerable Persons Registry**

The Vulnerable Persons Registry promotes communication between vulnerable persons, the people who support them and the police. This information will assist officers when responding to an emergency involving the vulnerable individual. The registry provides quick access to critical information about a registered person, such as who to call in an emergency, a detailed physical description, and any particular sensitivities that the person may experience.

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

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Support Groups

### Parents for Children's Mental Health (PCMH)

If you are a parent/caregiver worried about your child, or a young person looking for help yourself – please reach out. Our network of child and youth mental health centres has 4000 professionals ready to help children, youth and families with free counselling and treatment. We provide care in person, on the phone and virtually. No problem is too big or small. Waterloo PCMH groups will begin meeting again this fall. **Regular support group meetings** will take place Oct. 25, Nov. 22, and Dec 27. The ADHD support group dates are Oct. 19, Nov. 16, and Dec. 21. Find your closest child and youth mental health centre here: <https://www.family.cmho.org/>

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

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

### Preemie Parents of Waterloo-Wellington

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

Visit: <https://www.cpbf-fbpc.org/covid19>

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

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

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support**

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support, formally known as The Black Parent & Caregiver Support Group (BPSG) was created to provide a safe space for families of African descent to come together to meet and connect, share resources, expertise and needs, inspire and support one another through our unique and often challenging and isolating journey of raising Black children or supporting a sibling, of any age, with a disability. This is a volunteer-run group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. via ZOOM. There will be guest speakers, resource sharing, support and mentorship opportunities for attendees. Contact: For more details or to register, please contact us at [bpsgroup2020@gmail.com](mailto:bpsgroup2020@gmail.com).

### **South Asian Wellness Group**

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

### **The A-Team of Waterloo Region**

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



## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **CIA - Connecting, Interests and Activities**

CIA is a group in Waterloo Region for adults (18+) with Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) level 1. The purpose of the group is to create a safe and supportive space for people to have fun, meet and connect with others, and take part in activities. Join if you're looking for a positive place of belonging! Meetings take place at the Downtown Community Centre (35 B Weber Street West), in the Multi-Purpose Room. This is a drop-in group, so folks are welcome to join anytime between 5 and 7 pm. The next meetings will be taking place October 13, November 10, and December 8. If you have any questions, please reach out to Kelly Groh at 519-731-3923.

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

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario (APSGO) is for parents struggling with the behavior of a child, youth or young adult. APSGO support groups help parents/guardians develop effective strategies, set limits and boundaries, and build better relationships with their children.

The group currently meets via Zoom on Wednesday at 7:15pm.

Go to [apsgo.ca](http://apsgo.ca) for more information.

### **EarlyON - Make the Connection**

For caregivers and their children (birth to 36 months of age). Make the Connection, in partnership with YMCA of Three Rivers, provides interactive discussions about the key components of secure attachment for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. It also incorporates hands-on parent and child activities to align with discussion topics. Takes place at 44 Francis St S, Kitchener at the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre on Fridays starting November 11.

[Click here to Refer](#)

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

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

Contact Rob for more information [rmacdonald@lutherwood.ca](mailto:rmacdonald@lutherwood.ca).

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Engagement Opportunities

### **University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science**

University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science is seeking infants aged 18-47 months for a vision study to test for a new way to measure how well babies/toddlers can see. Contact Dr. Lisa Christian [lisa.christian@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lisa.christian@uwaterloo.ca) for more information.

### **YWCA Cambridge**

YWCA Cambridge "Roots of Empathy" is seeking families with infants 2-4 months in October. Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based program that has shown a significant effect on reducing levels of aggression among school children while raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy. A parent visits a local school classroom with their baby and a trained Roots of Empathy instructor nine times throughout the school year, each time for about 30 minutes. (Note the program runs virtually when necessary) To learn more or sign up, visit <https://www.ywcacambridge.ca/roots-of-empathy/>

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

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

### **State of employment for individuals with a developmental disability in Ontario**

Since 2018, the Family Support Network for Employment (FSNE) has been working to discover possibilities and advocate for needed transformations in the developmental services and employment system. FSNE is currently taking a survey on the state of employment for individuals with a disability in Ontario to fill the current gaps in knowledge on this topic. To participate, visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TS7ZJBJ>

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Inclusion Canada**

*Family Matters: Job Loss & COVID-19 Findings Now Available*

This project worked with families and self-advocates to better understand the impact of job loss during the pandemic and considerations for future supports for families and individuals. You can see the report and its findings here:

<https://inclusioncanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Final-Report-EN-Oct-27.pdf>

### **Infant and Child Mental Health Lab at York University**

The Infant and Child Mental Health Lab at York University is inviting caregivers and their infants (aged 3 - 10 months), to participate in a 2-part online research study. The first part examines caregiver-infant interaction at times when the caregiver is busy with common, everyday tasks. The second part examines the role of caregivers' experiences as they interact with their infants. To learn more about our study, please visit our webpage: <https://bohr.lab.yorku.ca/participate-in-our-studies/> Interested participants can email us directly at [yorkparentingproject@gmail.com](mailto:yorkparentingproject@gmail.com), or sign up using the form on our webpage.

### **Time Poverty Study**

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

### **City of Cambridge**

City of Cambridge is seeking feedback to understand the needs and actions to be taken to improve accessibility within the City of Cambridge. [Please complete this short survey](#) before Oct. 21, 2022. Your feedback will help inform the development of a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023-2026). This survey is available in different formats (including language translation e.g., paper, email, telephone). Please contact [accessibility@cambridge.ca](mailto:accessibility@cambridge.ca) or 519 740-4680 ext. 4292 for more information.

### **Wellbeing Waterloo**

The Wellbeing Waterloo Region [mini-survey](#) is now live. The survey is voluntary and confidential AND has a draw to win great prizes!

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **Empowered Kids Ontario & McMaster University**

In partnership with Empowered Kids Ontario, researchers at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University are completing an evaluation of virtual care services offered to children across Ontario. If your child currently receives virtual care in Ontario (or has received virtual care in the past), and you are interested in learning more about participating in this research, please contact us at [ekoeval@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ekoeval@mcmaster.ca) or call 905-525-9140 ext. 21263.

### **Siblings: Citizens with a Cause Is Recruiting!**

Siblings: Citizens with a Cause is a group of sibling advocates with a vision for a more inclusive Canada. Our team of siblings have important advocacy roles at Community Living Ontario, as they ensure that siblings of those who have disabilities are heard and represented in all settings. Their daily interactions with their siblings allow them to see first-hand the exclusion their siblings face, which is their motivation to advocate for a more inclusive Canada. This supportive network of youth shares personal stories, resources, and are a helping hand to anyone who would like it through advocacy initiatives such as their Siblings meetups. At these monthly webinars, youth and allies come together to discuss navigating life in Canada. If you have questions or wish to apply, contact: Agnes Palaganas, CLO's Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator, at [apalaganas@communitylivingontario.ca](mailto:apalaganas@communitylivingontario.ca) or Payal Khazanachi, Director of Inclusion Initiatives at [pkhazanachi@communitylivingontario.ca](mailto:pkhazanachi@communitylivingontario.ca).

### **Join the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)!**

The Re:Action4Inclusion Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is a provincial movement of youth from across Ontario that has steadily advocated for social change for over a decade. This movement is driven and empowered by youth leaders, with and without a disability, who see the importance of the basic human need to belong. This provincial network of youth is committed to overcoming the feelings of isolation and exclusion youth feel by embracing a culture of equity and inclusion.

Interested in getting involved with the Youth Advisory Committee? Want to work with a team of like-minded people to make a difference? [Apply here!](#) Want to learn more? [Click here.](#)

And if you still have questions, contact: Agnes Palaganas, CLO's Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator, at [apalaganas@communitylivingontario.ca](mailto:apalaganas@communitylivingontario.ca) or Nicole Canzoneri, Chair of YAC 2021–2022, at [nicolcanzoneri@gmail.com](mailto:nicolcanzoneri@gmail.com).

## Information, Opportunities & Resources

### **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>.

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

PLAN is inviting youth and young adults between the ages of 12 and 24 with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) to participate in a study. Youth are eligible to participate whether they have had actual contact with the criminal justice system as our study asks about both hypothetical and real-world legal decisions. Youth will be asked to answer questions relevant to their own past experiences. To participate, youth must be able to speak English and must currently reside in Canada.

Interested individuals can email: [PLANLab@uoguelph.ca](mailto:PLANLab@uoguelph.ca) or call 519-824-4120 ext. 53622.

### **Maria de Boer Changemaker Award**

Extend-a-Family Waterloo Region honours someone every year who identifies as disabled/having a disability who makes a positive impact for others in some way, and is looking for nominations for the fourth annual Maria de Boer Changemaker Award. The award winner will receive \$500. If there is someone who you'd like to nominate, please visit <https://www.eafwr.on.ca/changemaker-award-2022/>.

### **P4P**

After 2023, a person living with a developmental disability in Ontario, who does not have legal capacity, will have to apply for guardianship and relinquish all their legal rights simply to open an RDSP. And there are other situations where guardianship will be required in order to access and use an RDSP. This is wrong.

The RDSP Action Coalition calls on Attorney General Downey to address this issue by removing these legal barriers that are detrimental to so many people living with a developmental disability in Ontario. Visit [WeNeedAction.ca](http://WeNeedAction.ca) to learn more about the issue and what you can do to help. The RDSP Action Coalition is comprised of representatives from Autism Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Family Alliance Ontario, PooranLaw and Partners for Planning.

# Information, Opportunities & Resources

## Community News

### **Changes to Ministry of Health & Family-Managed Home Care funding**

Guardianship is no longer a barrier to accessing Family-Managed Home Care (FMHC) funding. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has officially updated the definition of “Substitute Decision-Maker” in its FMHC Program specifications to include, “an individual managing Ontario government funding from the MCCSS specifically from the Passport Program, Ontario Works, and/or the Ontario Disability Support Program on behalf of the Client who is an adult.”

Together with Community Living Ontario, PooranLaw has been advocating for changes to the MOH policy for over three years. This change took effect on Thursday, September 1, 2022. [Read more](#) to learn how this news impacts people living with a disability and their families.

## Inclusion Canada

[\*\*Inclusion Canada is advocating for all federal political parties to fast-track Bill C22\*\*](#), proposed legislation that would create a new Canada Disability Benefit. They are encouraging everyone to send a letter to their federal MP as soon as possible, while the legislation is being debated in the House of Commons. [\*\*Click here to find your member of parliament\*\*](#) and their contact details. By entering your postal code or just searching by your province you will then find your local MPs and their contact details, including their email address, where you can send an email on the importance of the Canada Disability Benefit and passing Bill C-22. Template letters in English and French can be found at the links below:

[\*\*EN letter\*\*](#)

[\*\*FR letter\*\*](#)