

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 148
August 2022

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What's In This Issue?

Summertime is in full swing, and August is here! We hope you have been having a fun-filled summer, full of adventure and time spent with family and friends.

At WRFN, August is a time of transition and planning. While we don't want to get too ahead of ourselves, September is just around the corner! The kids will be back to school before we know it.

So, although our School Issues Support Group is not meeting this month, we still have great activities planned for ANC and Coffee Club. There are also some great webinars, programs, support groups and engagement opportunities from other community organizations. Check them out below!



Support WRFN

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

Evening of Elegance 2022

On April 30, Waterloo Region Family Network hosted its seventh annual Evening of Elegance and its first in-person event since 2019! This year, the event was held for the first time at St. George Banquet Hall in Waterloo. This new venue allowed us to host a sit-down meal in a spacious hall where our guests could feel comfortable joining us in person once again. The health and safety of our guests and their families were our main priorities while planning and executing this year's event.

During the evening, guests had the chance to participate in a silent auction with a range of items and curated baskets from fantastic local businesses and generous community members. They also had an opportunity to purchase raffle tickets.



Our Self-Advocacy Liaison, Cristina Stanger, was our feature presenter and spoke about her work with WRFN and the impact her Self-Advocacy support has on individuals with exceptionalities. Her speech was heartfelt, full of honesty and humour.

We were fortunate to have Mike Farwell join us for the evening and be our energetic emcee. With his help, we were able to run a smooth and joyous evening!



Congratulations are in order for our two raffle prize winners!

- Jennifer Koebel won the \$1000 gift card to Langdon Hall donated by an anonymous donor
- Kim Sproul won the hot air balloon experience donated by Rogers Sports Media, CHYM 96.7, Country 106.7 and CityNews 570



THANKS FOR SHARING YOUR PHOTOS WITH US, KIM!

We also were honoured to present an award to two of our incredible volunteers for their time and dedication to WRFN. Both Jennifer Lassenby-Lessard and Christine Zaza received our Matthew MacGregor Award for volunteerism.



Thanks to everyone who joined, participated in our silent auction, and bought raffle tickets, we were able to raise **\$24,000** for Waterloo Region Family Network.

Many thanks to our sponsors Heffner Toyota, Melloul-Blamey Construction, Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP, Coupal Markou Commercial Real Estate Inc. Brokerage, David Schooley Broker at RE/MAX Twin City Realty Inc., Your Neighbourhood Credit Union, and RBC.

Grace Amidst Change

Cristina Stanger, Self-Advocacy Liaison

I'm finding myself in the midst of a lot of changes lately. We, at WRFN, are transitioning back to in-office work. We are doing so with the absence of my well-respected and loved colleague, Steph, who passed away this spring. My family is moving houses. My children are reaching new milestones. So to be completely honest, I am writing this article for myself as much as I am writing for you, the reader. I think we can all use a reminder to be gentle with ourselves, especially in the midst of changes.

Heraclitus is known to have said, "Change is the only constant." (Personally, I always thought dirty laundry was the one constant in life, but since worn clothes change from clean to dirty, I suppose Heraclitus accounted for that too). If anything, living during a pandemic makes the reality of change even more apparent. Benjamin Franklin took Heraclitus' statement one step further saying, "Change is the only constant in life. One's ability to adapt to those changes will determine your success in life." Well that sounds daunting, doesn't it? This may be true, but it's certainly not easy. Guess what? Sometimes I just don't feel like adapting, it's hard work for me. I was once told by a professional that, "change is hard for everyone, but it seems especially hard for you," – so I don't think my aversion to change is imagined.

And because making constant adjustments is very draining, I find myself working through frequent negative thoughts, frustrations and self-criticisms; this is what brings me to the concept of grace, both for myself and for others. The word 'grace' can have many different meanings, but I am thinking of it in terms of being considerate, kind, or merciful. In order to counteract those ominous quotes about change, I thought I would look up a few about grace to help see me through.

- "Grace is the voice that calls us to change and then gives us the power to pull it off." - Max Lucado
- "Grace, like water, flows to the lowest part." - Philip Yancey
- "For grace is given not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them" - St. Augustine of Hippo
- "Grace means that all of your mistakes now serve a purpose instead of serving shame." - Brene Brown (I will augment this last quote with my own spin – Grace means that all of my mistakes now serve to facilitate my adaptation to change, rather than serving guilt or shame).

Grace to get me through these challenging times:

- I am struggling with the loss of flexibility that I had with remote work. Grace.
- My colleagues and I are learning to work without Steph's physical presence. Grace.
- My children need more mom time, more reassurance, and more cuddles as we move. Grace.
- I can't remember where I packed an important item. Grace.
- My approach to pandemic public health measures is different from those of other citizens. Grace.
- I am too tired or sad to do anymore than the bare minimum. Grace.

So if you find yourself coping with a lot of change these days, as I am, maybe you'll benefit from reading these quotes about grace too. Let's all be a little gentler with ourselves.

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.



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.



August 2, 2022

"Successes and Challenges – Stories from the Group"

Come and share, or sit back and listen – everyone who would like to share will have a chance.

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

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

We invite you to think of a story you might like to share about yourself or your caregiving journey. If you want to just listen and not share a story, that is absolutely fine. At the beginning of the meeting, we'll make a list of people who want to share stories and we'll make our way through the list with each person on our list having a chance to share. There will be time for conversation and questions. We think we'll learn a lot from each other - we always do!

A reminder that we will continue the new feature to our monthly meetings called Ask Us Anything. This half-hour (9-9:30 pm) session is where you can stay on the Zoom call to ask questions on any topic.

If you'd like to join us, please email Mary Pike (maryjpike@hotmail.com) to let her know. Only those who RSVP to Mary will receive the Zoom link for the gathering.

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.

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 meeting will take place September 28.

For more information, please contact Sue.Simpson at Sue.simpson@wrfn.info.

WRFN's Family Resource Coach Team

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.

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

Conestoga College – Community Integration Through Cooperative Education (CICE)

The Community Integration Through Co-operative Education (CICE) program is a two-year certificate program designed to support students with exceptionalities to be more independent members of the community with the goal of transitioning to employment, other academic programs, or volunteering. All programming is modified to meet students needs and supported by a team of Learning Strategists. The program includes core courses common to all CICE students in topics such as human relations and communications, job skills, life skills, computer skills, and health and wellness. For more information visit: [Community Integration Through Co-operative Education](#) or contact Sara Wardell - swardell@conestogac.on.ca. Applications can be submitted through www.ontariocolleges.ca.

Fun Fearless Females

There's a ton of great events happening this August and September with Fun Fearless Females! Stretch & unwind takes place every Monday and there will be beach days, fun art projects, pizza nights and a 3-day trip to Bellwood Lake! Have a look at everything coming up on the Fun Fearless Females website.

[Events — Fun Fearless Females](#)

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 August 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.

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 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.

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](#).

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/

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.

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

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

Launch

Launch (an afterschool program) is new to the Region and offering free STEAM summer programming. Sessions are for kids in grades K-8 and they are offering virtual and in-person options (run at a location on Erb St in Waterloo). Scroll down to the calendar and click on the dates to register.

<https://www.launchwaterloo.ca/launch-programs>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops & Training

Microboards Ontario

MBO 101: An Introduction to Microboards

What is a Microboard? Is it right for my family? What's involved in creating one? This workshop explores these issues and more. Aug 12, or 23

MBO 102: Legal Aspects You Need To Know

This workshop explores how a microboard can offer a framework for legal and financial decision-making. Aug 4, 16, or 31

[Click here to register](#)

CADDAC

Executive Functioning Support Program

This program will provide parents and caregivers with important information about executive functioning and how it impacts children and teens with ADHD. Group members will learn tools and strategies to help them support their children with the areas of executive functioning that are challenging for them, and practice applying them in their homes. September 22 - November 17 at 6:30-8 pm.

[REFOCUS: Reinforcing Executive Functioning with Optimism, Compassion, Understanding, and Support \(Eastern Canada\) - CADDAC](#)

Interactive ADHD Child Parenting Course

Parents and caregivers beginning the ADHD journey. October 6 - November 24 at 6:30-8:30 pm.

[Interactive ADHD Child Parenting Course - CADDAC](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Events & Webinars

Inspiring Possibilities

Community Living Ontario invites you to register for the Inspiring Possibilities AGM & Conference 2022! For the first time in three years, we will be hosting this event in person at the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North Hotel & Suites in Richmond Hill from September 14th–16th. [Register Here!](#)

CADDAC's ADHD Conference

CADDAC's 14th Annual ADHD Conference is back again on October 22 & 23. This year's focus is on lived experiences with ADHD and comorbid conditions like eating disorders, sleep disorders, ASD, anxiety, depression, PTSD, substance use disorder, OCD and more.

[Canada's 2022 ADHD Conference | Oct 22 & 23 | Register now! \(caddac.ca\)](#)

Bridges to Belonging: Choice, Connection, and Community

Register by Friday, August 5 for Choice, Connection, and Community, a series of four in-person workshops supported by individualized facilitation for seniors in Waterloo Region to discover YOUR gifts and strengths, connect them with your interests and passions and create a plan for social connection and belonging in community. Join us at Chartwell Bankside Retreat Retirement Home (71 Bankside Drive, Kitchener), on Wednesdays (August 10, 17, 24 & 31) from 2-4 pm with an optional 30 min social at the end. Register here <https://forms.gle/K91KT9ekucMotJoy6> For more information contact spanchaud@bridgestobelonging.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Resources

The Value of an Experiential Learning Model for Family Medicine Residents

Disability and Health Journal by Selick, et al.

Members of the H-CARDD program looked at why it is important to give family medicine residents hands-on training instead of just lecture-type teaching when it comes to developmental disabilities by comparing residents' knowledge, comfort, and skills based on the type of learning received. They conclude that it is time to not only invest in more teaching about this population but also to consider how the teaching is done.

<https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1936657422000152>

Mental Health and Well-being of Adults with IDD during COVID: A Narrative Review

Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities by Lunsky, et al.

This review article summarizes what is known internationally about the mental health of adults with intellectual disabilities during COVID-19, from multiple perspectives. It also explores various efforts to prevent or treat mental health difficulties with this group and makes some suggestions about what needs to be considered during pandemic recovery.

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

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

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

There is lots of talk right now about Covid-19. 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

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. Registration is required.
- *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](#).

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

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

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)

You've applied to DSO - now what? While you're waiting for Ministry-funded services, here are some things you can do.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tveyIWXA_Y

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.

Parents for Children's Mental Health

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 4,000 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. PCHM ADHD groups are currently taking a break for the summer.

Find your closest child and youth mental health centre here:

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

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](#).

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

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>.

Fostering Information from Family & Children Services

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Support Groups

Adult ADHD Summer Support Groups

Join CADDAC's new Adult ADHD Support Groups, led by CADDAC trained facilitators, who are all adults with ADHD, with their own ADHD stories. It will run Virtually on Zoom on Thursday nights from 7:30pm-9:00pm EST, according to the schedule offered. Sessions will allow you to share your story or strategies, learn new information and best of all do it with others who understand what it means to be an Adult with ADHD.

shorturl.at/IMSU9

Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (WWDSS)

The Mothers' Connection group is a great opportunity for moms who have a child with Down syndrome (age 6 and under) to share celebrations, struggles, goals, practical information, and resources with one another. The program runs monthly, every second Wednesday at 1:30pm (currently online). WWDSS also offers a Mom's Night Out and Dad's Night Out program for parents to connect and support one another. For more information please email info@wwdss.ca.

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.cpbfbpc.org/covid19>

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. Sawubona is a Zulu greeting. It literally means “I see you.” More than words of politeness, sawubona carries the importance of recognizing the worth and dignity of each person.

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.

South Asian Wellness Group

The South Asian Wellness Group is a drop-in group every Thursday from 3 pm to 4:30 pm. 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. 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

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). Starting this fall, meetings will be in-person. Stay tuned for details coming soon!

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.

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.

Strong Moms, Safe Kids

Strong Moms, Safe Kids is a program from KW Counselling for mothers who may have experienced abuse in intimate relationships. Interpreters can be provided for those not comfortable communicating in English. The group provides time for families to learn about the impact of abuse together, and also provides smaller groups for mothers, youth and younger children. If you are interested in talking about whether the Strong Moms, Safe Kids program is right for your family, please call 519-884-0000 and ask for the Strong Moms, Safe Kids Coordinator.

Province-Wide Monthly Virtual Groups for Adults with FASD

The Fetal Alcohol Resource Program at ABLE2 is happy to announce the first two Province-wide virtual groups for adults living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). They include the FASD Educational Group and the FASD Social Group.

Both groups will be held monthly. You can participate at your comfort level from the comfort of your home.

For more info contact the Fetal Alcohol Resource Program at 613-761-9252 Ext. 234 or fasd@able2.org.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CIA - Connecting, Interests and Activities

There's an all-new 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. Parking passes are available at the front desk. Just mention you are joining the group in the Multi-Purpose Room. In the case that the community centre doors are locked, please use the white button on the wall next to the left of the door labelled 'Main Office Buzzer' or call Kelly at the number below.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Kelly Groh at 519-731-3923.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

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

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>

Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions

The Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions is developing a policy paper focused on mental health in children in the middle years (ages 7-12) with support from Optimus SBR. .

Specific dates and times for focus groups are:

- Service providers: July 14, 11 am – 12 pm
- Academics: July 5, 11 am -12 pm
- Child Welfare (system partners): July 6, 10 -11 am
- Educators (system partners): July 6, 11 am -12 pm
- Public Health and Health Promotion (system partners): July 7, 10 -11 am
- Clinical Directors: July 14, 3 – 4 pm
- Family session: July 20, 5 - 6 pm

If you are able to take part in one of these sessions, please confirm your interest via email to Sagnic (Sagnic.das@optimussbr.com).

Advocacy Kit for Increasing Special Services at Home

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

- *Survey on Accessible Information for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

If you are an adult 18+ with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) or a caregiver of an adult with IDD, we want to hear from you. We want to understand how to make information from the Government more accessible and understandable.

Fill out the survey and you can enter a raffle for a prize. [Click here to find out more](#), email AIIDD@camh.ca or call 437-328-6761.

[Consent Form \(camhx.ca\)](#)

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 or call 519-824-4120 ext. 53622.

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 to 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, or sign up using the form on our webpage.

Physical Activity & Immigrant Women – Cancer Link Research Study

The University Health Network is conducting a research study on the link between physical activity and cancer prevention for immigrant women. Research shows that physical activity can reduce the risk of many types of cancers. This research study aims to assess the benefits of community-based education for immigrant women on the importance of physical activity in preventing cancer and how to weave activity through daily activities. If you are an immigrant woman aged 18 or older, you are invited to participate in the study. Please reach out to Sharon.iziduh@uhn.ca if you are interested.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Community News

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.

Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB)

In the Spring of 2021, the WRDSB launched its first-ever Student Census. As a part of our commitment to increase transparency and strengthen our partnerships with community partners, we are pleased to now share the results with you.

These results give us a deeper understanding of the cultural, social and demographic makeup of WRDSB students. With data representing over 30,000 WRDSB students, the WRDSB Student Census results will be used to help us better support students. With this information, we will be able to identify differences and gaps in students' experiences and outcomes based on their diverse needs, identities and experiences. You can access our summary reports and supporting documents on our Student Census website: <https://www.wrdsb.ca/about-the-wrdsb/research/student-census/>.