

Where exceptional families thrive

176

January 2025

Table of Contents

SEAC Updates 2

What's Happening at WRFN 4

WRFN's Drop-ins at EarlyON 5

Finding Support in Relief 15 Years of WRFN 6

Kaleidocope Kids Program Update 7

WRFN's IEP Workshop 8

Spectrum on the Spectrum 9

ANC 10

EarlyON Resource Page 11

Community Info, Resources and Opportunities 12

What's In This Issue?

Although we are sad that the holidays have ended, January breathes cool, crisp air into the new year's excitement. We can set new goals, seek new opportunities and get 2025 off to a fresh start, as fresh as the newest falling snow. Resolutions are set in stone; you don't have to make or follow the letter, but we at WRFN hope the new year provides some optimism for you and your loved ones.

The new year is also the perfect moment to embrace returning routines. With school back, WRFN's **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Workshop on January 22** is designed to help you make adjustments and learn how to make this document more supportive. (full details inside).

This month, we invite you to dive into various engaging events we and our incredible partner organizations curated. These activities bring families together, fostering connections and creating memorable shared experiences.

At WRFN, our commitment is unwavering: we strive to connect families of children with exceptionalities to vital support and resources. Our vision is a thriving community where every family feels appreciated, understood, and empowered.

In this edition of the Family Pulse, we hope these offerings ignite your enthusiasm for the new year and strengthen the bonds within our community.

Please Note the "*" represents new items for January



[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

To begin this meeting, it was announced that Scott Miller is now the Interim Director of Education. During a recent meeting, there was a discussion about departments making an extra effort to collaborate in-service of students. An example of this collaboration is the Assistive Technology Department, which works alongside those who serve French-speaking students to create materials.

In terms of professional learning opportunities, there have been various learning sessions for staff focusing on Universal Design, differentiated instruction, and mental health. The ACE Educational Assistants will have professional development with teachers during March Break.

Jodi Albrect gave a presentation about the Board's service dog policy. This presentation included definitions of service animals, service dogs, and guide dogs, as well as the responsibilities of principals, families/adult students, and the student handler. Expectations regarding the service or guide dogs were also discussed, along with the process for getting a service or guide dog approved and what happens once the animal is approved.

The next SEAC meeting is scheduled to take place virtually on **January 8, 2025**.

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Catholic District School Board- Special Education Advisory Committee Update - Submitted by Karen Applebee WRFN SEAC Representative

The committee met on December 4th, where Andrea Snyder, the school board mental health lead, gave a presentation focusing on the three main pillars being taught to staff. These pillars of mental health and wellbeing are as follows:

- Pillar 1: Trauma and Stress Informed Classroom Practice
- Pillar 2: Teaching Neuroscience and Social and Emotional Skills
- Pillar 3: Safe Relationships - Staff Wellbeing - It takes a steady adult to settle a child or adolescent

Andrea provided a comprehensive presentation filled with valuable information.

The committee also discussed the upcoming event related to preparation for the sacraments. The date of February 5th, 2025, has been set, and the location will be the meeting room of St. Anthony Daniel. The title of the event was reworked to avoid confusion for families; it will now be called "Grace for All: Preparing for the Sacraments for Students with Special Needs."

Information and a link to register for the event will be released in early January. Trustee and community events and updates were also shared.

The next SEAC meeting will take place on **Wednesday, January 8**, and will be detailed in February's newsletter.

What's Happening at WRFN

WRFN programs and services are available in person. Supports are also available through phone and email connections and through other virtual formats. Please reach out and let us know how we can help you and your family.

Ask A Self-Advocate

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

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

Parent Mentor Program

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

Our Parent Mentors provide information and emotional support; share ideas and strategies; and connect their mentees with community resources. Learn more about our Parent Mentor Program [here](#).

School-Issue Parent Support Group

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

lisa.cook@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 Lisa Cook at 226-338-7274 or email lisa.cook@wrfn.info.

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

Coffee Club

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

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

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

WRFN Drop-Ins at EarlyON

Meet with Lisa, our Family Resource Coach

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

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Jan 7	EarlyON Cedar Creek 55 Hilltop Dr, Ayr, ON	10-11 am
Jan 8	EarlyON Riverside 250 William Street, Elmira	10-11 am
Jan 14	EarlyON Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am
Jan 15	EarlyON St. Boniface 225 Starlight Ave, Breslau	10-11 am
Jan 22	EarlyON Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
Jan 28	EarlyON Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am



Contact Lisa -

lisa.cook@wrfn.info
226-338-7274

More dates to come!



www.wrfn.info





Finding Relief in Support

Celebrating **15 Years** of Empowering
Families and Individuals with Exceptional Needs

A Heartfelt Thank You
to The Matthew
MacGregor Charitable
Giving Fund! For Their
Generous Matching
Donation!



We are so honoured to
have your trust and
support!



Matthew MacGregor

Donate to WRFN today so that more exceptional families feel relief through support. Visit [here](#) or our website's "Donate" button. The campaign has been extended to January 27 in Honour of Matthew's Birthday.



Important Update!

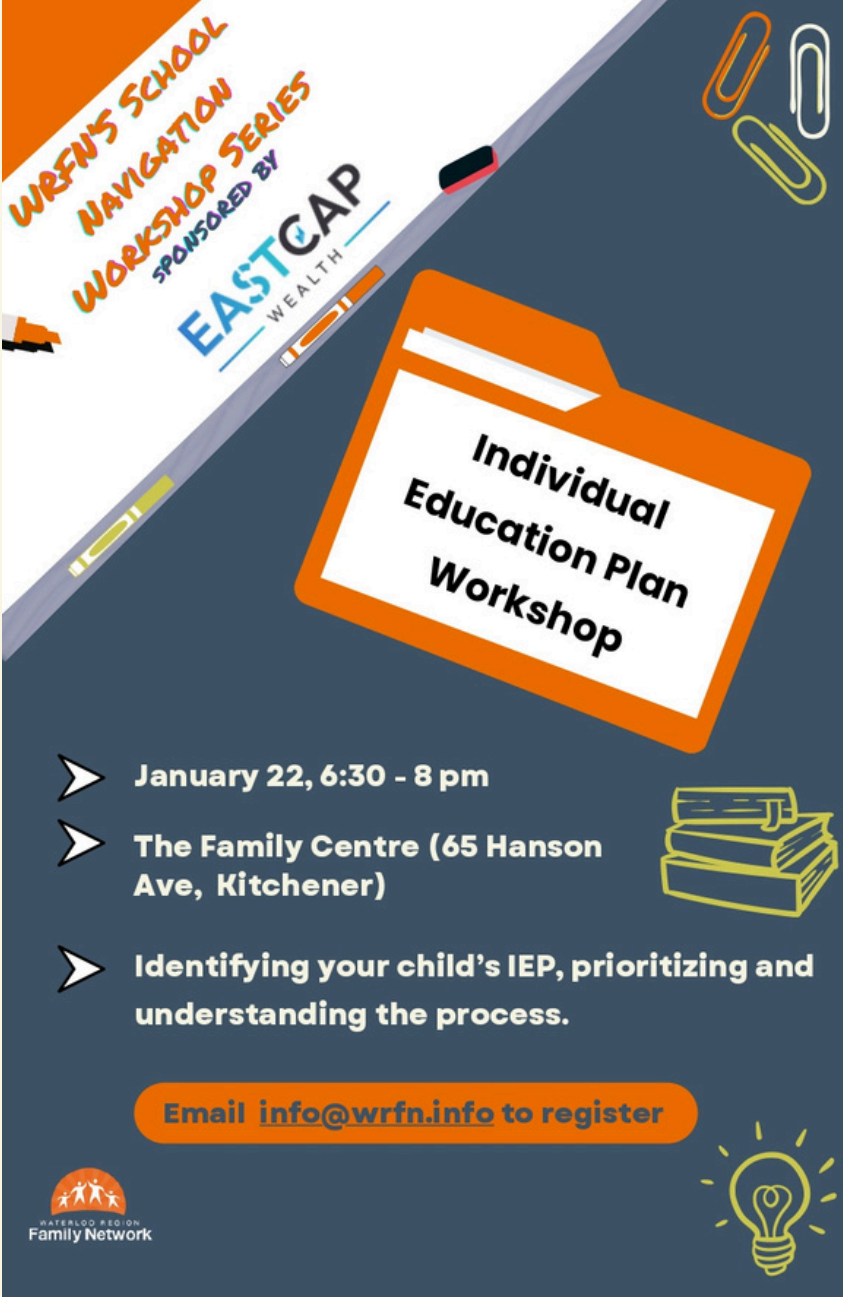
the Kaleidoscope Kids Program is on pause with a relaunch in March.

We apologize for any inconvenience this pause may cause but we do believe it is necessary to ensure thoughtful planning that will allow us to serve even more families.

Empower Your Child's IEP at WRFN's Upcoming Workshop

Attention parents and caregivers! Don't miss the upcoming Individual Education Plan (IEP) Workshop hosted by the Family Network. This is your chance to bring your child's IEP and receive hands-on guidance from WRFN's Family Resource Coach, Lisa Cook, on how to optimize its messaging and prioritize learning goals.

Led by Lisa this workshop will equip you with the tools and strategies to effectively advocate for your child's unique educational needs. Unlock the key to your child's academic success by attending this invaluable session on January 22, 6:30-8 pm at The Family Centre in Kitchener.





WRFN'S SCHOOL NAVIGATION WORKSHOP SERIES
SPONSORED BY **EASTCAP WEALTH**

Individual Education Plan Workshop

- **January 22, 6:30 - 8 pm**
- **The Family Centre (65 Hanson Ave, Kitchener)**
- **Identifying your child's IEP, prioritizing and understanding the process.**

Email info@wrfn.info to register

Email info@wrfn.info to secure your spot today and take the first step toward empowering your child's educational journey.



SPECTRUM ON THE SPECTRUM

NEW DAY!
THE FIRST SUNDAY
OF EACH MONTH
6:30-8:30PM

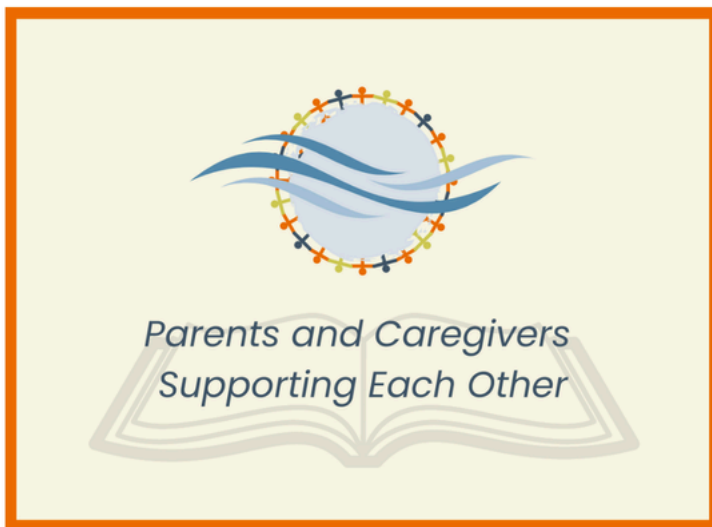


A monthly drop-in group for queer and trans people in the Autistic community in Waterloo Region (Ages 18+)

info@wrfn.info | info@ourspectrum.com

Spectrum
Event Calendar





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.



January 7, 2025

Hiring Personal Support Workers

We hope you will join our first A New Chapter meeting of 2025 when we'll be learning all about Hiring a Support Worker. Our meeting will take place via Zoom on Tuesday, January 7th at 7:30-9:00pm (with our Ask Us Anything segment from 9-9:30pm). Information and insight about hiring, training, and maintaining a support worker will be provided by our panel which will include Nancy Garza (Independent Facilitator), Jill Swanton (Manager, Extend-a-Family), Kathy Waybrant (parent), We hope to see you!

All other 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.

EarlyON Resource Page

EarlyON Programming*

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

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre

[Cambridge Family Early Years Centre](#) is offering “Young Parents Connect,” a free family program for pregnant and parenting youth, Tuesdays from 1-3 pm. Call the centre at 519-741-8585 for the next session start date. Each week the group cooks a meal to enjoy together and discuss a parenting topic/resource/service that is of interest to the group. At the end of each session, join EarlyON staff for a fun interactive circle time with the children. Cambridge Family Early Years Centre, Unit 105, 73 Water Street North, Cambridge, Ontario.

EarlyON Grandparents Connect

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

Rainbow Family Drop-In

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

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

Early Learning and Child Care Navigators

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

- [Send an online request to meet with an Early Learning & Child Care Navigator Request](#)
 - [Email an Early Learning and Child Care Navigator](#)
 - For more info please visit [ELCC Navigators Landing page](#)
- Call 519-741-8585 ext. 3008 and ask to speak with an Early Learning and Child Care Navigator

EarlyON Mobile Sites

In addition to our Centres, EarlyON offers mobile drop-in at various sites in the Waterloo Region. Join other children, caring adults, and families in play and exploration together! EarlyON Educators are available to provide support and information around early learning topics, community resources, programs, and referrals in our play-based environment. To learn more about our mobile sites, call 519-741-8585 x3001 or visit the [Locations Page](#).

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

Community of Hearts: January Social Club Events – Fun for Ages 16+*

Board Game Day

Start the new year with an afternoon of fun at Board Game Day on Sunday, January 12th, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. The event will take place at the Community of Hearts Lifelong Learning Centre (inside the Old Quebec Street Mall, 55 Wyndham St. N., Guelph). Enjoy snacks, friends, and countless board games. Admission is \$5, providing the perfect opportunity to reconnect and play.

Play with Clay

Get creative at Play with Clay on Sunday, January 19th, from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm. The activity will take place at Play with Clay (42 Wyndham St. N., Guelph) and offers a hands-on clay painting experience. Participants can choose a sculpture to paint, bring snacks, and enjoy time in the studio. Finished masterpieces will be available for pick-up later at the studio or the Lifelong Learning Centre. The cost is \$40, offering a relaxing and artistic way to spend the afternoon.

Lunch at Angel's

Lunch at Angel's will take place on Sunday, January 26th, from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm at Angel's Diner (23 Wellington St. E., Guelph). The event includes a classic diner lunch and the chance to spend time with friends. Lunch is included in the \$40 cost, providing a welcoming and enjoyable experience.

All events are passport-funding friendly and open to anyone aged 16 and up. To register, call 519-826-9056 or email info@communityofhearts.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Stepping Stones Expressive Arts Intuitive Painting*

On Wednesday evenings beginning January 15th from 7 - 8:30 pm, Stepping Stones Expressive Arts offers their online Intuitive Painting sessions, which are sure to be an experience that will help you through the dark winter weeks. This program offers you mindful, quiet painting time with an opportunity to use watercolour paints, write, and reflect on what you learn from our art-making. You will explore what it means to use our intuition and learn about what it means to use this way of knowing. This group is for anyone who wants to explore with paint. There is no art-making experience necessary. We teach only enough techniques for you to begin to experiment and learn from the paints themselves. The cost is \$125 for 6 sessions or \$25 for individual sessions. If you need an art kit, we can provide these for \$30. Fees can be e-transferred to steppingstonesarts@gmail.com, or they can make other payment arrangements upon request. Register on their [website here](#).

Community of Hearts: Breaking Barriers*

Breaking Barriers, an inclusive fitness program with Meredith, is the opportunity to build gym confidence, set fitness goals, and improve your physical health. This program caters to beginners, experienced individuals, and anyone looking to be more active in a supportive and empowering environment.

"Breaking Barriers - Gym Confidence

This program is a four-week session designed to help participants learn how to use gym equipment, manage stress and nerves at the gym, and practice positive self-talk. This program focuses on creating a personalized gym routine, familiarizing participants with gym environments, and building confidence to transition into commercial gym settings.

Breaking Barriers - Mobility & Strength

The program also runs for four weeks and emphasizes the importance of mobility for a healthy, independent life. Participants will focus on balance, coordination, range of motion, cardio, and strength training to enhance daily living and overall fitness.

Small group sessions are \$250, and one-on-one sessions are \$300, with Passport Funding available. Classes will take place at the Lifelong Learning Centre in Guelph (55 Wyndham St. N.). Registration is open at 519-826-9056 or by emailing info@communityofhearts.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region: Pre-Teen Hangout Group

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region is offering a Pre-Teen Hangout Group for youth aged 8-12, running on Fridays from November 15, 2024, to January 3, 2025, at 14 Braun Ave., Kitchener. This program provides respite for caregivers while offering meaningful recreational activities and skill-building opportunities. The cost is \$85 for the session. Families can register through [MyCommunityHub and pay online here](#). If you have SSAH funding through Extend-A-Family, a coupon code will be emailed for registration. For more information, contact Teen Meet Up Groups at 519-741-0190 ext. 213 or teenhangout@eafwr.on.ca.

KW Habilitation: Youth Exploring Possibilities Skills Program

Money Matters

On Thursday, January 9 from 6 - 7:30, explore the fundamental concept of money; What it is, how it functions, and why it is important. Discover the history of money and learn about the many forms of currency we have today.

Budgeting Basics Part 1

On Thursday, January 16 from 6 - 7:30, discover the essential skills needed to take control of your finances and build a solid foundation for financial success. Learn about saving your money, and discuss why it is important.

Budgeting Basics Part 2

On Thursday, January 23 from 6 - 7:30, practice financial goal setting and discuss the various bank account options available to you.

Earning Income and Navigating Funding

On Thursday, January 30 from 6 - 7:30 pm, explore your options to earn an income and discuss all things related to money-making. Discover the funding options available to you and learn how to easily access them.

Understanding Taxes, Debt, and Paying Bills

On Thursday, February 6 from 6 - 7:30 pm join to discuss what taxes, loans and debt mean, and explore the world of paying bills.

Smart Spending Habits

On Thursday, February 13 from 6 - 7:30 pm, gain the tools needed to maintain smart spending habits and discuss the importance of needs vs. wants.

All Programs take place at KW Habilitation Bullas Hall, 99 Ottawa Street South for more info on each, visit here: <https://ow.ly/Cokc50Uh4PP>. To register, visit their shop <https://shop.kwhab.ca/.../youth-exploring.../yep-skills/>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Keep Your Head Up Foundation

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

Special Olympics

Visit the Special Olympics events calendar to get additional information, resources and registration links for events coming up in Kitchener-Waterloo. <https://www1.specialolympicsontario.com/events/calendar/>

Ready. Set. READ!...

Kitchener Public Library: Ready. Set. READ!...is a program for JK, SK and Grade 1 students. Through stories, literacy games and reading in small groups with volunteers the program aims to show kids reading can be fun! Sign up online at: <https://kpl.events.mylibrary.digital/event?id=55160> or by phone: 519-743-0271 x261.

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada: REFOCUS Parenting Program

Does your child have difficulty focusing? Does your child have difficulty following directions? Does your child have difficulty handling strong emotions? If you said "yes" to one or more of these questions, your child might be having difficulties with executive function. Executive function can impact working memory, flexible thinking and self-control. It can also affect all aspects of life, both at school and at home. In this 10-week interactive course, parents and caregivers will learn about executive function and how executive function affects children and teens, and they will learn tools and strategies to help their children increase these skills. For more information and to register, [visit here](#).

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada: Adult ADHD Group Coaching Program

This 6-week group coaching program, running from January to February 2025, will introduce individuals to foundational topics for living well with ADHD and help them gain insight, build upon their strengths and add strategies to their ADHD toolbox. Please note that this program is designed for individuals personally living with ADHD. View all timeslots and register below. To register, please [visit here](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings

Whether it's children and youth groups, employment, 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 [here](#).

Sunbeam

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

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

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

Fun Fearless Females

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

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

Cambridge Food Bank

Cook, stuff, plant, bake and play at the Cambridge Food Bank! To learn more about and register for programs offered at Cambridge Food Bank, please contact Vanessa Tonic: vtoncic@cambridgefoodbank.org 519-622-6550 x109.

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!](#)

LCOworks

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

SPECTRUM Youth Under the Rainbow

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

Karis & Humber College's Culinary Skills Development & Employment Program

Get hands-on kitchen training from professional chefs through in-person & virtual ETraining with Humber College's Culinary Skills Development & Employment Program. This program is open to adults 18+ with a developmental disability. Learn more and fill out an [application here](#), then email your application to Mary Lou Kelly, Program Coordinator: mkelly@karis.org.

City of Kitchener

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

MoveMeant For All

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

Woolwich Counselling Centre: Autism and ADHD Counselling*

Woolwich Counselling Centre is offering counselling for autistic individuals and those with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), both with and without hyperactivity. The two professionals running it are Kate Suffling, an Occupational Therapist, who provides individualized assessment and support. She helps clients build executive function skills such as time management, planning, prioritizing, and organization. The other is Jessie Quinn, a Registered Social Worker, who offers support to parents of children with ADHD or autism. She assists in emotional regulation and helps increase independence in children. For more information, visit www.woolwichcounselling.org/adhd-services/.

Region-wide tutoring information

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

Level Up

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

Corte

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Ontario Caregiver Organization Programs

Caregiver ID Programs

Available in healthcare settings, these programs formally identify caregivers, recognizing their role in patient care.

Partners in Care Pandemic Toolkit: Designed for hospitals, long-term care homes, and other care settings, this toolkit provides tools to facilitate caregiver engagement during COVID-19.

Caregiver as Partners e-Learning:

A two-module series for healthcare providers, offering practical tips and strategies for working with caregivers.

Time to Talk Toolkit:

For providers across care settings, this toolkit promotes meaningful conversations between staff and caregivers.

Health Privacy and Consent Resources: Resources to help caregivers understand privacy and consent rules to optimize care partnerships.

E-Learning Module for Caregivers:

A 1.5-hour learning module to help caregivers communicate effectively with care providers.

Ontario Caregiver Helpline:

A 24-hour helpline offering information and referrals to connect caregivers with support. Call 1-833-416-2273.

OCO Caregiver Programs & Services:

Programs supporting caregivers, including peer support groups and SCALE Program.

Resources to Support Meaningful Engagement and Co-Design with Caregivers:

Resources and tools for organizations and caregivers to engage in meaningful co-design efforts.

For more information, visit ontariocaregiver.ca or contact partners@ontariocaregiver.ca

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre Autism Social Skills Group*

SDRC offers a 6-week Social Skills Group to children/youth with an autism spectrum disorder between the ages of 11 and 17 years. A referral is required as this is not a drop-in group. The Six-Week Group runs on Tuesday evenings from 5:00 pm-6:30 pm. Autism Monthly Social Group SDRC offers a Monthly Social Group for youth between the ages of 14 and 17 years with an autism spectrum disorder with no intellectual disability. Individuals must be able to be independent. The purpose of the group is to help individuals develop social skills. A referral is required as this is not a drop-in group. The Monthly Social Group is offered every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 5:00 pm-6:30 pm, with every other month including a community outing. Please call 519-741-1121 for more information about how to join.

Community of Hearts: Improv Club – Connect Through Laughter and Play*

Join Improv Club for six weeks of games and activities designed to foster connection, creativity, and laughter. Each session ends with a Student Showcase where participants share their accomplishments with family and friends.

Session One: Mondays, 4:00 pm–6:00 pm (January 20–March 3, with the showcase on March 3).

Session Two: Mondays, 4:00 pm–6:00 pm (March 17–April 28, with no class on April 21).

The cost is \$120 per session, and Passport Funding is available. No experience is needed—just come ready to have fun! All sessions are held at the Community of Hearts Lifelong Learning Centre (55 Wyndham St. N., inside the Old Quebec Street Mall). Register at info@communityofhearts.ca or call 519-826-9056.

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: Emotional Regulation Workshop Series*

These workshops are scheduled for the following dates:

1. January 21, 2025, from 6:00 to 7:00 pm
2. February 11, 2025, from 10:00 to 11:00 am
3. March 18, 2025, from 6:00 to 7:00 pm

Aimed at parents and caregivers of individuals with developmental disabilities, these workshops will address myths about emotions and provide strategies to promote emotional regulation. Participants will explore the idea that "all behaviour is communication" and learn ways to interpret the behaviour of nonverbal individuals. To register, please sign up by the respective deadlines at www.sdrc.ca/workshops-and-training.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections

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

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

City of Cambridge

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

blanchardj@cambridge.ca.

KidsAbility Behaviour Support Services

Find support for your family with Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) services offered at KidsAbility locations across Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington. The team works closely with you to address your family's needs by creating a personalized plan within carefully set up packages for you and your child with the tools to support and succeed. Explore fee-for-service options for your child by connecting with at GPS@kidsability.ca. For more information and a current list of service offerings, visit us www.kidsability.ca.

Resilience Project

The Resilience Project from FACS Waterloo has some new programming for children, youth, and caregivers. Learn more and register for programs

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Recreational Respite

Virtual group programs have been developed in partnership with participants to address a variety of interests, skill practices, goals and outcomes that promote inclusion, encourage community participation, and nurture social connectivity.

Visit the website if you are interested to learn more:

<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! Aptus' Clinical Services team created the Sensory Workout training and demo videos, with generous funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services.

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

Spectrum BRIQ House

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

Cambridge Food Bank

Cook, stuff, plant, bake and play at the [Cambridge Food Bank](#)! To learn more about and register for programs offered at Cambridge Food Bank, please contact Vanessa Tonicic at vtoncic@cambridgefoodbank.org at 519-622-6550 x109.

Black Youth Mental Wellness Circle

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sports for Special Athletes Programming

A volunteer-run organization that provides subsidized recreation and sports for teens and adults with exceptionalities in the Waterloo Region. We focus on fitness and fun and sometimes forget all about the score. We are inclusive and never leave anyone on the bench. Pay a \$20 annual administration fee (from Sept-Sept) no matter how many sports you participate in. Plus, a \$5 sports fee for each sport you sign up for. Some sports may have additional program costs; for example, Basketball for beginners will be on Fridays from 6:30 pm to 8:00 starting October 11, 2024; the cost is \$165, including a \$50 sports fee. Or Adapted Swimming will be on Thursdays, starting October 10, 2024, at 253 Fisherville Rd. The cost is \$100. Contact Don Clarke (519) 744-4881. [Visit here for contact info](#) and to register.

Student Links Program: Application and FAQ

Funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Student Links is an opportunity for students (ages 14 to 21) who identify as having an intellectual disability to explore ideas for their future after high school. It matches students and mentors who share a common passion or interest. The goal is to enhance their capacity to make informed decisions about their future before leaving school and support the natural development of relationships and connections to their community. Student Links is tailored to meet the needs of each individual student and may include hands-on experiences, exploration of new interests, and an introduction to work, volunteer or community-based roles. Opportunities are created for students to meet with people currently engaged in or with substantial knowledge of the identified interest.

The possibilities are endless! After completing the application found at the bottom the first step is for the student to meet with the Student Links coordinator and together identify ideas, interests, passions and roles they are interested in. [Fill out an application form here](#) and see some frequently asked questions by visiting <https://studentlinks.es/faqs/>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

March of Dimes

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

Has a disability or other barrier prevented you from imagining yourself in the workforce? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have a job? Do you want to learn about the types of jobs that best suit your personality? Would you like to know how working would affect the benefits you currently receive? If you answered yes to any of the questions above, Paving the Path for Work can help. This 6-week program offered by March of Dimes Canada is for people who have had limited exposure to employment but want to learn more. Offered virtually and in person. If you have any questions about Paving the Path to Work, please contact Miriam Braithwaite at mbraithwaite@marchofdimes.ca or 905-687-7467 ext. 227.

Muslim Social Services Programs

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

Al-Nour Project

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

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Every Friday evening, from 5 to 7 pm at the Chandler Mowat Community Centre, join the "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" program. This initiative, facilitated by Community Connector Sally Alkarmi, reaches out to all women to create a healthy and supportive environment. The program aims to reduce the risk of isolation and promote diversity within the KW area.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

ThriveTogether Youth Program

Join the exclusive ThriveTogether Youth Program every Friday from 5 to 7 pm at The Family Centre, 65 Hanson Ave, Kitchener. This program is designed for young men aged 14-20 and combines sports and social activities to promote mental well-being. Participants can earn volunteer hours, enjoy snacks, and receive bus tickets.

For More information visit <https://www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org/>.

Adults in Motion: and Winter Camps

Adults in Motion offers engaging Summer and Winter Camps for adults (18+) with diverse needs. These camps provide enriching experiences tailored to individual interests and abilities. With a supportive 5:1 camper-to-staff ratio and personalized skills and needs assessments, every camper gets the attention they deserve.

PD Days Camp

Adults in Motion offers PD Days Camp for adults (18+) with diverse needs. These single-day camps are ideal for those looking for an enriching and flexible way to spend their day off. With activities tailored to individual skills and interests, participants will enjoy a fulfilling experience.

School Transition Programs

Transitioning from high school can be a significant step, and Adults in Motion provides specialized School Transition Programs to support adults (18+) with diverse needs. These programs facilitate a smooth transition by focusing on skills development and personal growth.

Virtual Camp (Lubdub)

Adults in Motion offers Virtual Camp Days through [Lubdub] (<https://www.lovelubdub.com>) for those who prefer online activities or cannot attend in person. These sessions provide a variety of engaging and fun online activities tailored to adults (18+) with diverse needs. Join from anywhere and enjoy the inclusive and supportive environment of Virtual Camp.

Free Program Trials

Are you not sure if these programs are the right fit? Adults in Motion offers the opportunity to try out any of their programs for free! This allows participants to experience the camps and activities without any commitment.

For more details and to register visit <https://www.adultsinmotion.org>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Locations and Contact Information:

Adults in Motion operates in multiple locations to serve the community better. Reach out to the nearest centre for more details and to sign up:

Oakville: 141 Bronte Rd | 289-400-3723 | [oakville@adultsinmotion.org]

<mailto:oakville@adultsinmotion.org>

Cambridge: 653 King St E (Preston) | 519-277-3723 |

[cambridge@adultsinmotion.org] <mailto:cambridge@adultsinmotion.org>

Hamilton: 627 Main St E | 905-541-3723 | [hamilton@adultsinmotion.org]

<mailto:hamilton@adultsinmotion.org>

Kitchener: 317 Franklin St N | 519-577-3723 | [kitchener@adultsinmotion.org]

<mailto:kitchener@adultsinmotion.org>

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: Cultivating Community Wellness Community of Practice Chats!*

As part of a short series, these one-hour sessions are geared towards those who have a leadership role in championing mental health in their developmental services organization. Perhaps you are a member of an agency's Mental Health and Wellness committee, an operational leader, a human resource representative, or an agency leader. Participate in these sessions to engage in conversations with fellow agency representatives across the sector and exchange insights regarding your challenges, solutions, and resources. These sessions will include breakout room discussions. They you to join us for a Cultivating Community Wellness Chat focused on Cultivating Financial Wellness on Tuesday, January 21st, 2025, at 1 pm. [Click here to register](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

oneROOF Youth Services Host Homes program

oneROOF's Host Homes program offers short term stays for youth who are at risk or experiencing homelessness in the Waterloo Region. OneROOF staff work alongside private homeowners who volunteer by opening up a space in their homes offering short term accommodation to youth in need. While in the home, youth are supported by program staff to establish goals and work towards finding long term, stable housing by the end of their stay. Program staff also offer support to the home providers with weekly check-ins and 24/7 on call support. Both home providers and youth are screened to ensure safety and ability to follow program guidelines. Providers are expected to provide a grab and go breakfast, evening meal, as well as a room that is furnished. In return, youth participants pay a weekly stipend of \$90. Providers are not expected to take on a guardian/parental role, but rather to be a supportive adult who can be a mentor and role model. To learn more information visit <https://www.oneroof.org/host-homes>.

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada: Understanding Adult ADHD Virtual Program*

This three-part program takes place in January on 9, 16 & 23. It is called Understanding ADHD and how it impacts all areas of life is a pivotal starting point for moving forward. This program designed for those who are newly diagnosed and are embarking on a personal journey of self-discovery. After this program you should be able to:

- Understand the wide range of Adult ADHD symptoms.
- Become aware of how ADHD can impact various aspects of life.
- Take proactive steps to explore non-medication approaches to managing ADHD.
- Identify how ADHD medications work and how they can improve daily functioning.
- Access resources that can bring positive changes to lives of people with ADHD

To Learn more and to register [visit here](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Guelph Youth Music Centre: Sound Explorers

Join Sound Explorers on Thursdays, the winter session of this program running from January 16 to March 27, 2025. The program costs \$165 (10 Classes) and focuses on creating a positive social environment for children with disabilities to engage in music with peers. Using a variety of music activities, such as singing, drumming, movement to music, instrument playing, and more, participants will be able to express themselves and get creative musically. Activities are adapted to meet the needs for a variety of diagnoses including ADHD, Austim Spectrum Disorder, developmental delays, Down syndrome, and more. The focus of this group is to develop social skills in a fun, casual music setting! You can [register here](#). The program is located at the Guelph Youth Music Centre, 75 Cardigan Street Guelph.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops

KidsAbility Summer Camp Support for 2025*

Planning for Summer Camp? KidsAbility is here to help! Join the Summer Camp Fairs and Webinars—all at no cost to attend.

What is Offered:

- Camp Consults
- Planning Resources available on the website, including:
 - Summer Overnight Camps Directory
 - Summer Day Camps for Children, Teens, and Adults
 - Camp Planning Steps handout, presentation, and video
 - "All About Me" instructions, samples, and template
 - Past Summer Camp Fair Webinar recordings
 - Summer Camp Funding Options
 - And more!

Upcoming Webinars:

- Dec 10, 2024 – Overnight Camps
- Jan 7, 2025 – Day Camps for Children 4-12 (Waterloo Region)
- Jan 8, 2025 – Day Camps for Children 4-12 (Guelph/Wellington)
- Feb 5, 2025 – Day Camps for Teens and Adults

Join the Webinars: Families can sign up for webinars via the events page:

[KidsAbility Events](#).

Camp Fairs are offered virtually from 7 – 9 PM. Webinars run from December - March at 12 noon or 7:00 PM.

An open discussion will follow each presentation for any questions. For additional support after reviewing the resources, email rectherapy@kidsability.ca or call 1-888-372-2259 to request a camp consult.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Woolwich Counselling Centre: Glad To Be Me (Ages 4 To 7)*

This workshop on January 8 is of no cost and is a fun-filled event that promotes self-esteem and self-worth in children. To register, please visit:

www.woolwichcounselling.org/upcoming-events/

Partners For planning: ODSP Webcast*

If your family member with a disability requires financial help with basic living expenses, including medical expenses, they could be eligible for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Understanding how this program works and how to maintain it alongside other financial resources will ensure your family members continue to receive this support for as long as they may need it.

On January 8 at 7 pm, join Graeme Treeby, expert and disability advocate, for a webcast overview of the ODSP, including clarifications on recent changes. Following this presentation, Graeme will be available for a live Q & A. Topics include:

- How to qualify and apply for ODSP
- Definition of disability under ODSP
- ODSP asset exemptions and regulations
- How work and other income impacts benefits

Please [register here](#) for the webcast.

Woolwich Counselling Centre: Be You! 2SLGBTQIA + Support Group (Ages 12 to 16) *

The no-cost in-person support group provides a respectful environment in which to connect and seek support on Tuesdays from 4 to 5 pm, starting on January 14 and ending on April 8. To register, please [visit here](#).

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: An Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Virtual Workshop) *

This session is open to individuals, families, and professionals on Monday, January 27, 2025, from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm. It will explore the strengths and challenges faced by those with ASD, offering strategies for creating supportive environments. Registration is required by January 24 at

www.sdrc.ca/workshops-and-training.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: School Refusal Virtual Workshop*

On Monday, January 27, 2025, from 1 pm to 2 pm. Register by: January 24, 2025, and join Presenters Denise Burke, Jeannie Chaves, Lisa Hardeo and Wendy King for a workshop designed to provide a general overview of strategies for parents of children and youth displaying school refusal issues. This workshop will review causes, typical behaviours associated with them, and tips and strategies around possible causes behind these school refusal behaviours. Additionally, the instructor will provide an example of what a transition to a school plan could look like. This workshop will provide a generalized view of school refusal issues and will not target child-specific examples. Please call 519-741-1121 for more information about how to join.

Woolwich Counselling Centre: The Gottman Method: Strengthening the Couple's Relationship (Adult Workshop) *

Do you want to strengthen your marriage or relationship? In this research-based workshop, you will be introduced to the Gottman approach entitled The Sound Relationship House. Join this to learn how this therapeutic approach can support the improvement of intimacy and friendship within a relationship and help manage conflict in a respectful and healthy manner. The workshop takes place on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. To register, you can [visit here](#).

Woolwich Counselling Centre Effective Problem-Solving with Our Children's (Parenting Workshop) *

is a free virtual workshop. This workshop will cover the value of effective problem-solving to promote healthy and energetic relationships with our children. Practical strategies to minimize parent-child conflict will be shared. The workshop is on Wednesday, January 29, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. To register, please [visit here](#).

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: Virtual Speaker Series on Internet Safety and Online Bullying*

The event will take place on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm and Thursday, February 27, from 6 pm - 8 pm. This session is designed for parents, caregivers, and professionals who want to learn tips and strategies for keeping children safe online and understanding what to do if they experience bullying. To register, visit www.sdrc.ca/workshops-and-training or call 519-741-1121 ext. 2201.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: Your Disability Tax Questions Answered*

This workshop is scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2025, from 12 pm to 1:30 pm. It will provide insights on applying for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) and information about other CRA disability-related tax programs. Interested participants should register by February 21 at www.sdrc.ca/workshops-and-training.

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: An Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Virtual Workshop) *

This session is open to individuals, families, and professionals on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm. It will explore the strengths and challenges faced by those with ASD, offering strategies for creating supportive environments. Registration is required by March 14 at www.sdrc.ca/workshops-and-training.

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: Discussing Puberty and Sexuality with Your Child (Virtual Workshop) *

Scheduled for Tuesday, March 25, 2025, from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm, this workshop will address the changes that occur during puberty and offer resources and strategies for guiding a child through this developmental stage. Registration is open until March 21 at www.sdrc.ca/workshops-and-training.

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: Collaborating With Schools (Virtual Workshop) *

This workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, May 1, 2025, from 1:00 to 2:30 pm. Aimed at parents and caregivers of children with developmental disabilities, it will provide insights into navigating a child's school journey and effective collaboration with educational institutions. To register, please sign up by April 25 at www.sdrc.ca/workshops-and-training.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Celebrate Winter: A Wet Felting Workshop with Stepping Stones Expressive Arts*

On Saturday, February 1, from 1 to 4 pm, Stepping Stones Expressive Arts are excited to offer a very special workshop through Homer Watson House and Gallery. The afternoon will comprise a brief opportunity to explore and appreciate the outdoors on the grounds of the gallery, basic instruction on wet felting, and creating a wall hanging using wet felting, stitching and needle felting. The creating time will include live improvised accompaniment by Celtic Harpist Sharon Johnston! What a treat! To find out more and register for this unique event, [visit here](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Resources

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario: New Website*

FASD Ontario is excited to introduce you to the brand-new [FASD website here!](#)

Entirely redesigned with the FASD community in mind, this platform is your go-to destination for FASD resources, tools and connections...all just one click away!

PooranLaw*

PooranLaw shares valuable resources aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities and their families. With a commitment to providing expert legal guidance, PooranLaw addresses the complexities of various legal issues affecting the community. While individuals with disabilities may face barriers to decision-making at various life stages, there are often less restrictive and more accessible alternatives to guardianship. The appropriate solutions depend on the specific decisions facing each individual.

To assist families, PooranLaw provides wraparound legal services tailored to every stage of life. This includes:

- Accessing educational supports
- Advocating for fairness in the workplace
- Advising on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Navigating relationship and marriage breakdowns
- Building secure futures through complex tax, trust, and estate planning, including comprehensive domestic contracts

Explore the "Decision-Making Tree" to understand the different areas of decision-making under the current legal framework in Ontario.

For more information about the services offered, visit [PooranLaw](#).

Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health New Website*

Exciting news--Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health has launched its new [website!](#)

Any questions? Click on the "website" link to set up a time to connect with the intake team. In addition to calling or emailing to sign up for groups or workshops, you can now complete a form directly on the website. [Groups and Workshops · Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health](#)--Group topics range from newcomer youth wellbeing (including standing strong work female-identified youth), children's socio-emotional health (including extinguish your fire and hocus focus), parenting (including a circle of security, grandparent/kin connect and strong moms safe kids), financial wellness, relationships (including building better boundaries) and so much more!

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Porchlight: Quick Access Counselling

Porchlight offers single-session Quick Access counselling sessions, letting you get help sooner, when you need it. Because, sometimes, you need a little help, sooner. Call now for your appointment: 519-621-5090 or visit porchlightcnd.org

ConnectABILITY Roommate Matching Webpage

Are you looking for a roommate or want to post your own roommate ad? ConnectABILITY has got you covered! Their roommate matching webpage is a fantastic resource where you can find and post ads that accommodate your specific housing needs. Whether you need a space that's accessible, close to transit, or just a great fit for your lifestyle, ConnectAbility.ca makes it easy to connect with potential roommates in our community. Check it out today and find the perfect match for your housing needs. Visit:

<https://connectability.ca/connected-families/forum/housing/>.

Partners for planning: Update to the Special Services at Home Guidelines

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) has updated the Special Services at Home (SSAH) guidelines to align with CanChild's F-Words in Child Development. Families can now use their SSAH funding flexibly to support their child's interests and development. [Visit the MCCSS website](#) for the new guidelines. P4P has created an [SSAH Overview video and resource page](#) to help families navigate SSAH applications.

Counselling Collaborative of Waterloo Region: Autism Mental Health Support

Are you a parent of an autistic child or teen or an autistic adult seeking mental health support? The Counselling Collaborative of Waterloo Region is here to help. This collaborative includes five Community Mental Health Agencies in the region, with over 50 therapists offering professional autism-informed therapy. Locations throughout Waterloo Region include Kitchener, Cambridge, Waterloo, Elmira, and New Hamburg. Virtual and telephone appointments are also offered. The central intake can connect individuals with the CCWR agency of choice. Flexible payment options include a sliding scale based on income, insurance benefits, or OAP core funding. Eligibility for other funding may also be discussed during intake. To register for counselling, visit counsellingwr.ca or call 519-884-0000.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) Collaborative

The SNR Collaborative offers support to Licensed Child Care Programs in Waterloo Region for children up to 12 years old. KidsAbility and KW Habilitation make up the SNR Collaborative, which aims to streamline services and ensure all children can thrive in early learning environments regardless of their abilities. Early Childhood Educators, parents, and caregivers can contact the SNR Collaborative with questions about a child's needs. The Collaborative operates within a tiered services model to provide tailored assistance. Visit snrcwaterlooregion.ca for more information on programs, tips, strategies, and referrals. To contact KidsAbility, please email spotservices@kidsability.ca. For inquiries related to KW Habilitation, you can reach them at earlylearning@kwhab.ca. If you have any questions, you can call SNAP at 519-514-7627 or email snap@kwhab.ca. For inquiries regarding the SNR Collaborative, please email [Kristy](#) or [Carlyn](#).

211

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

Ask a Nurse at the Welcome Spaces

Public Health Family Nursing services are available at three Welcome Space locations, offering one-to-one, drop-in support from Public Health Nurses. This service is provided from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM on the following days:

- Waterloo: Mondays at 99 Regina St S
- Kitchener: Tuesdays at 20 Weber St E
- Cambridge: Thursdays at 150 Main St

Nurses can assist with questions on pregnancy, growth and development, feeding, child health, and local health services. For more information, e-mail Lrintche@regionofwaterloo.ca

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Aide Canada

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

Breastfeeding Dashboard

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

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

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

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

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

March of Dimes Hi, Tech!

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Plexus

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

Positive Behaviour Supports Corporation (PBS Corp.)

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

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

Family Support Network for Employment

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

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

Rainbow Community Calendar

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

Imagine Canada

Imagine Canada has a ton of great resources and information on non-profit and charity sector-related policy in their newsletter which is called 360. You can sign up here: <https://imaginecanada.ca/en/360>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Woolwich Counselling Free First Session

Wondering if counselling is for you? Try your first session at Woolwich Counselling Centre for FREE! Open to any resident of Woolwich or Wellesley Townships. Contact us to learn more: www.woolwichcounselling.org/contact-us/.

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County: Resource Page

ldawc is excited to announce that their resource page is now live! Whether you're a student, parent, educator or caregiver, you'll find valuable information on local programming, learning disabilities, IEPs and other supportive resources in the community. The page is designed to support you with the information and connections needed to navigate learning disabilities and ADHD. Visit the [page here](#).

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Recent Publications from Team Members

Stay informed with recent research publications focusing on mental well-being among family caregivers and the impact of virtual wellness courses for adults with IDD. Notable studies include "Predictors of Mental Well-Being Among Family Caregivers of Adults with IDD During COVID-19" by O. Mendoza et al., and "Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, Sleep and Mental Wellbeing in Family Caregivers" by L. Koch et al. Additionally, an easy-read version of "The Impact of a Virtual Wellness Course for Adults with IDD" is now available for download, highlighting key findings on supporting health and wellness during challenging times. [Download the Easy Read here!](#)

Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities & Women's College Hospital Collaboration

The initiative "Improving Health Equity: Breast Health Education for Athletes with IDD" addresses significant barriers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) face in accessing breast health information and screenings. In collaboration with H-CARDD, the Peter Gilgan Centre for Women's Cancers at WCH has developed tailored breast health education resources aimed at improving awareness and access during the 2024 Special Olympics Ontario Provincial Spring Games. [Learn more about this essential resource!](#)

Ontario Caregiver Association

- *SCALE Program: Caregiver Needs and Well-being*: [SCALE \(Supporting Caregiver Awareness, Learning and Empowerment\)](#) focuses on topics relevant to new or experienced caregivers, including caregiver stress, managing feelings of anxiety or guilt, and self-care for the caregiver.
- *Caregiver 101*: Learn about caregiving roles, conflicts in caregiving, caregiver burnout, what to expect, developing resilience, and what supports are available. Access the online course [here](#).
- *Young Caregivers Connect*: Young Caregivers Connect is a website to help young caregivers aged 15-25. The website was designed in collaboration with, and for, young caregivers and offers information and resources and a way to connect that address their unique needs. Visit the website [here](#).
- *Time to Talk Podcast*: Join Host Michelle Jobin along with experts and caregivers, to discuss things that matter most to caregivers. Access the podcast [here](#).

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>.

CanFASD Mental Health Resource and Practice Guide

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

Indigenous Relations Circle

The Indigenous Relations Circle is an initiative of Autism Alberta's Alliance and is interested in the Indigenous and autistic experience in Alberta. The newsletter is distributed four times per year and includes work that our circle is doing as well as events happening around the province that you may be interested in. We hope to increase connection and community between Indigenous Autistic communities. If you are interested, please subscribe [here](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Surrey Place and CAMH – New Online Mental Health Toolkit

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

2023 Youth Impact Survey Data Briefs and Snapshots

This data brief overviews the 1,867 responses received, covering UNICEF's nine child and youth well-being domains. It offers insights into the post-pandemic well-being of young people in the Waterloo Region. [View the briefs.](#)

2023 Youth Impact Survey Geography Snapshot

This snapshot report separates data by four geographic regions—Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, and the Townships—to give a more detailed picture of child and youth well-being across the Waterloo Region. [View snapshot.](#) [View Geography deep dive.](#)

2023 Youth Impact Survey Age Snapshot

This snapshot report presents data segmented by three age groups: ages 9 to 12, 13 to 15, and 16 to 18. [View snapshot.](#) [Request the deep dive.](#)

2023 Youth Impact Survey Immigrant Snapshot

This snapshot report compares the experiences of children and youth born in Canada with those not born in Canada, highlighting well-being trends between these groups. [View snapshot.](#) [Request the deep dive.](#)

2023 Youth Impact Survey Gender Identity Snapshot

This snapshot report breaks down data by gender identities—boy, girl, and gender diverse—to provide a detailed picture of child and youth well-being. [View Snapshot.](#) [Request the deep dive.](#)

2023 Youth Impact Survey Sexual Orientation Snapshot

This snapshot report compares the responses of children and youth from various sexual orientations to offer a clearer picture of their well-being. [View the snapshot.](#) [Request the deep dive.](#)

2023 Youth Impact Survey Experiences of Homelessness

This snapshot compares the responses of children and youth who have experienced homelessness to those who have not. [View the snapshot.](#) [Request the deep dive.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

2023 Youth Impact Survey Long-term Physical or Mental Condition Impacts Experiences

This snapshot explores the responses of children and youth who have experienced a mental or physical condition to those who have not and reflects in their experiences. [View the snapshot](#). [Request the deep dive](#).

2023 Youth Impact Survey Racial Identity Snapshot

This eighth and final snapshot report breaks down the responses based on racial identities, showcasing the impact of racial identity on the well-being of children and youth. [View the snapshot](#). [Request the deep dive](#).

Tiny Home Communities: Innovation or Segregation?

With the ongoing housing crisis, several Canadian provinces are developing tiny home communities for vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities. Senior Policy Analyst Rachel Mills explores how these well-intentioned solutions can sometimes lead to harmful outcomes. It's crucial to learn from history and build truly inclusive communities. [Read the full article](#).

Partial Day Attendance in Canadian Schools: an Inclusive Education Canada Roundtable

Inclusive Education Canada held a roundtable discussing the issue of partial day attendance, where students with intellectual disabilities are forced to attend school for only part of the day. This practice disrupts learning and can lead to isolation. The roundtable featured leading experts and Mr. Kelly Lamrock, K.C., the New Brunswick Child and Youth Advocate, who recently released a powerful report titled "A Policy of Giving Up." [Access the report](#) and [watch the roundtable](#).

CAMH New Report Innovative Practices in Supporting ALC Patients with a Dual Diagnosis

A [new report](#) highlights innovative practices used by hospitals and community organizations across Ontario to support successful hospital-to-community transitions for alternate levels of care (ALC) patients. Organized around the 10 core transition components of the Practice Guidance report, it aims to promote knowledge exchange and facilitate implementation, primarily for health and developmental service providers. Visit the [project website](#) for more information and resources.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Access 2 Card

The Access 2 card is designed for individuals with permanent disabilities who need attendant support at participating venues. The card allows the attendant to enter for free while the cardholder pays regular admission. Eligibility extends to people of all ages and disability types. It's accepted at numerous venues across Canada, including many movie theatres and recreational sites. To obtain the card, the person with the disability fills out an application form on the Access 2 website, which requires confirmation of need from a healthcare provider. The card costs \$20 for three years or \$30 for five years, and once the application is submitted, cards are typically issued within 4 weeks. Visit here to apply [Access2 - Easter Seals Canada Access 2 Entertainment Program \(access2card.ca\)](https://www.access2card.ca).

Kerry's Place Brave Space

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

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

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Blog Post by Dr. Yona Lunsky*

In the latest blog post titled "Bravery in Our Attempts: Lessons from Special Olympics," Dr. Yona Lunsky explores the Special Olympics motto, "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." The post emphasizes the importance of fostering environments that encourage participation, regardless of outcomes, and shares inspiring stories of athletes who have found confidence and community through their experiences. [Read the full blog to explore the transformative power of belonging and support.](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Accessibility Services Offered Through the KPL

Borrow a Chromebook

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

Daisy Reader with Download Content

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

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

New Yoto Mini Collection

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

Visiting Library Service

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Partners for Planning

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

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

The Royal Mental Health Care & Research

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

<https://bit.ly/3dRvlo2>

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Practice Guidance for ALC Patients

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

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

Support Groups

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

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

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario

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

Province-Wide Monthly Virtual Groups for Adults with FASD

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

Qualia Counselling Services – New Moms Experiencing Postpartum Anxiety and Depression

Qualia Counselling Services is extremely excited to announce the launch of a brand-new support group for new moms! The support group has an 8-week program designed for New Moms Experiencing Postpartum Anxiety and Depression. This specialty group is for new moms looking for a welcoming space to learn, share, and practice skills and techniques to manage their emotions and thought patterns as they lead a balanced life through their postpartum. For more information, please contact our administration team at info@qualiacounselling.com or [visit our website](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Guelph Wellington Family Network

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

familynetworkGW@gmail.com

Indwell

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

Qualia Counselling Services

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

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

Pearson Airport

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

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

South Asian Wellness Group

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

The A-Team of Waterloo Region

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

Virtual Peer Support for Newly-Diagnosed Autistic Women

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CIA - Connecting, Interests and Activities

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

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

Virtual Support Group for Adolescents with FASD

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

Street Therapy

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

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

Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society Support Group

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

Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) Past Webinar Presentations

Are you interested in accessing the recordings of CADDAC's seminars from the live presentations at the 15th Annual ADHD Conference? Please click the link below!

<https://caddac.ca/past-premium-conferences-workshops/>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre Autism the Monthly Fathers' Support Group*

If you are a father in Waterloo Region who has a child (of any age) with an intellectual disability and/or autism. The group meets monthly. It is a great opportunity for dads to discuss a wide range of topics related to parenting a child with an intellectual disability and/or autism. Fathers learn from guest speakers as well as from each other, sharing wisdom, understanding and a chance to talk to other dads who "get it." Some of the topics discussed in the past year were: mindfulness, sharing the diagnosis and advocating for your child. The Fathers Support Group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 6:30 – 8:00 pm. Please call 519-741-1121 for more information about how to join.

Sunbeam Development Resource Centre: Mothers' Support Group* Weekly Group

The Mothers' Support Group is a 6-week group, providing the opportunity for mothers to discuss a range of topics related to parenting a child with an intellectual disability and/or autism. Topics include understanding and sharing the diagnosis, grief and resilience, community resources, behavioural challenges and self-care. Guest speakers from the community and SDRC also contribute their expertise. The weekly group is a great way to connect with other mothers who understand your daily experience. It is a small group of 6 – 10 members and runs for 6 consecutive weeks. Two times are offered: Wednesday evenings from 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm or Thursday mornings from 10:00 am - 11:30 am.

Monthly Group:

The Monthly groups are offered at two different times: Daytime: The last Friday of the month from 10:00 am to 11:30 am. The Evening time is on the last Tuesday of the month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. The purpose of the group is to connect with other mothers, share ideas, learn more about community resources and get support. Speakers are often invited to share information on topics of interest to group members. Some of the topics discussed in the past year were anxiety, school issues and grief.

Please call 519-741-1121 for more information about how to join either.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CADDAC Support Groups

ADHD Support Groups - Adult ADHD and Parent Support Groups

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

ADHD and Substance Use Disorder Peer-led Support Group

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

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

True Connections Upcoming Social Communication Support Group

The "True Connections" group offers weekly social Zoom meet-ups to learn about social communication, values & friendships, and other related skills such as understanding non-literal language (i.e., sarcasm, slang, puns) and body language cues. This group will meet once a week on Zoom to participate in interactive content lessons and activities, including some virtual reality! The start date for the group is not set yet, but we are planning on a late January/early February 2025 start date. The group runs for 12 weeks for the cost of \$60, one weekday evening from 4:30 - 6 pm on Zoom. For questions or more information, please contact Brittany via email at brittanyfelice@elemenoe.ca or call 519-800-3483.

Adolescent & Caregiver Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Group

Qualia Counselling Services is launching Adult, Adolescent and Caregiver Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Groups in January 2025 at their Waterloo location. The Adult group (18+) runs for 16 weeks on Tuesdays from 6-8 pm, starting January 7, 2025, for \$2,500. The Adolescent & Caregiver group (ages 12-17) lasts 21 weeks on Wednesdays from 6 to 8 pm, starting January 8, 2025, for \$3,000. Both groups focus on evidence-based strategies to improve mental health, covering mindfulness, emotional regulation, and distress tolerance. Registration is now open, with payment plans available and NIHB funding accepted. This group will be offered in person at our Waterloo office at 430 The Boardwalk (Medical Centre 1, 3rd floor Doctors' Lounge). To register Info@qualiacounselling.com or call 519-742-0500.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

Siblings Canada

For Families

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

For Service Providers

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

P4P Planning and Facilitation Collaborative

The Planning and Facilitation Collaborative (PFC) is live! This space allows professionals and aspiring professionals to share knowledge, experiences, and develop skills through online courses on planning and facilitation. We invite planners and facilitators to join the PFC and help spread the word. For more information, visit this [link](#).

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Community of Hearts

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

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

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

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

Phone: 416-535-8501 ext. 32817

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

OMSSA Recreation Providers Survey

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Wilfrid Laurier Research Study: Help us understand the pathways to ASD diagnosis

Wilfrid Laurier researchers are looking for parents of children who have obtained, or attempted to obtain, an autism diagnosis for their child in Canada. We are looking for parents of children who have, or have attempted to, obtain an autism diagnosis for their child in Canada, and are willing to share information about their experience. If you are interested. 18+ years of age and agree to participate you will be asked to provide information about when you first suspected your child might be autistic, the steps you took trying to obtain a diagnosis, resources that were helpful and unhelpful, as well as provide information about your child's autistic traits. Information will be gathered through a secure online survey that takes 15-45 minutes (depending on the length of your responses) to complete. Upon completion, you will be entered into a draw for a \$50 gift card. For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact: Dr. Nichole Scheerer at diagnosispathways@gmail.com This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at Laurier REB #8510 This research is being conducted by Dr. Nichole Scherer.

Queen's University and Development Services Workshop Initiative: Caregiver Direct Funding Survey*

Researchers at Queen's University and parents who know the challenges of supporting loved ones with developmental disabilities would like to invite the person primarily responsible for managing individualized / direct funding for support services to participate in a survey about their experiences managing directly hired support workers or independent contractors. They have partnered with the Developmental Services Workforce Initiative (DSWI) to conduct this study. This survey aims to delve into the realities faced by families in recruiting, hiring, training, and managing support workers. By understanding what works well and what challenges exist, we strive to enhance the support systems available to families. Your invaluable experiences and insights can greatly contribute to shaping the future of direct/individualized funding and the Journey to Belonging in Ontario. This study has received ethical approval by the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board. Survey Link: [Queen's University Survey of People Managing Individualized / Direct Funding](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Queens University Study – Caregiver Stigma Experiences

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

Karis Disability Services – Host Families Needed

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

E-mail: wellingtonhostfamily@karis.org or visit <https://karis.org/get-involved/participate>

Federal Survey Re: Registered Disability Savings Plans

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

Shared Picture Book Study

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Barriers for Participation in Physical Activity Study

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

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

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

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

Spectrum Events Calendar and More

Check out the [Rainbow Community Calendar](#), where you'll find details on SPECTRUM's groups and events. This is also your clearinghouse of 2SLGBTQIA+ events in Waterloo Region.

QRIB Hangouts

Come join the QRIB community hangouts, where Queer, Racialized, Indigenous, and Black individuals foster a home away from home! In collaboration with the Willow River Centre, Spectrum's BRIQ House hosts get-togethers with refreshments (ex., Karaoke, bonfires, etc). The events are free though capped at 30 people, so we recommend RSVPing! All allies are welcome and encouraged to donate (ex. \$5) to the Willow River Centre to support safer queer racialized spaces locally. [RSVP here](#).

Recruiting Board Members

Spectrum is looking for individuals with the following experience or skills: finance and accounting, IT, legal and liability, or governance. This is a great opportunity to network and build connections within the community.

They strive for their board to match their community as fully as possible. Therefore, they are especially interested in hearing from candidates who identify as non-binary and/or Black, Indigenous, or Racialized. If you are interested, visit [here](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Volunteer Opportunities with LDAWC

If you're looking to make a meaningful difference in a child's life, the Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County (LDAWC) offers several rewarding volunteer positions. Volunteers will gain valuable experience working with children with suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities, earn volunteer hours, and receive graduate school reference letters. Training and supplies are provided.

Reading Rocks

A literacy support program that focuses on improving the reading skills of children with learning disabilities. Volunteers can work one-on-one with a child to help them progress on their literacy journey. For more details or to apply, contact ldwacrr@gmail.com or call 519-837-2050.

Executive Skills

A program that helps children develop essential executive functioning skills such as planning, organizing, and time management. Volunteers will work closely with children to enhance these skills in a fun, supportive environment. For more information, contact ldawcexecutiveskills@gmail.com or call 519-837-2050.

SOAR

A program is designed to support children in developing their social and organizational skills. Volunteers can help children build confidence and practical skills to navigate their academic and social environments. To apply, contact LDAWCsoar@gmail.com or call 519-837-2050.

For more information about these volunteer opportunities, visit www.ldawc.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

News

Fall Economic Statement Misses The Mark: Urgent Needs Of People With Disabilities Ignored*

Inclusion Canada expresses disappointment over the federal government's Fall Economic Statement (FES), citing a lack of meaningful progress in addressing poverty among people with disabilities. Despite a \$61.9 billion deficit and \$20 billion in new spending, the FES fails to raise the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) to a livable amount. While confirming the CDB's tax-exempt status and introducing positive measures like automatic tax filing for lower-income Canadians and support for PSWs, these steps fall short without adequate income support. Krista Carr, CEO of Inclusion Canada, calls for bold action in the 2025 federal budget, including fully funding the CDB, investing in inclusive housing and employment initiatives, and empowering disability organizations to advance inclusion and human rights. As political uncertainty continues, Inclusion Canada urges the government to prioritize people with disabilities, ensuring dignity, equity, and economic inclusion.

There are some positive measures announced in FES;

- **Tax Exemption for the CDB:** Ensuring the CDB is not taxed is a step in the right direction. As a result of being tax exempt, it will not have to be reported as income which should prevent a reduction to other federal programs individuals receive (ie. Canada Child Benefit, GST Credit, Canada Workers Benefit). Although a positive measure, it falls short without a significant increase in the benefit amount for the CDB.
- **Automatic Income Tax Filing** – commitment to introduce legislation to automatically file tax returns for lower-income Canadians beginning in the 2025 tax year will reduce barriers to access important income support programs for people with disabilities.
- **Support for Personal Support Workers (PSWs):** Improving conditions for PSWs is welcome news that can enhance quality of support for people with disabilities. However, without robust income support for those receiving that support, this measure will fall short.
- **Focus on Inclusion and Accessibility:** References to diversity, inclusion, and intersectionality are encouraging. Yet these words must be matched by funding and policies that directly improve the daily lives of people with disabilities.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

A Call for Meaningful Action in 2025: Inclusion Canada calls on the government to use the upcoming 2025 federal budget to:

- Fully fund the Canada Disability Benefit at a level that ensures dignity, equity, and a path out of poverty.
- End funding for congregate housing, investing instead in community-based, dispersed, inclusive housing solutions.
- Embed accountability measures in childcare agreements to guarantee inclusive early learning and childcare.
- Invest further in inclusive employment initiatives like Ready, Willing, and Able (RWA), helping people with intellectual disabilities secure real jobs at competitive wages.
- Invest in the capacity of disability organizations, empowering them to advance inclusion and human rights.