

Where exceptional families thrive

Issue 147
July 2022

Table of Contents

SEAC Updates 2

Thoughts for
Summer 4

What's Happening
at WRFN 10

Community Info,
Resources and
Opportunities 12

What's In This Issue?

School is out for summer! Happy summer vacation to you and your family. We hope you have a fun trip, special outing or celebration planned to soak in the season.

While we're here to support your family through things like school issues, we are still around all summer to support you through anything your family is experiencing. And our groups, like ANC, are still meeting!

Check out this month's newsletter to see what's happening at WRFN and other community organizations this July.



Support WRFN

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

SEAC Updates

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

This month's SEAC meeting began with Teneile Warren, the Equity and Inclusion Officer from the Board, joining us to share the work that had been done on the Student Dress Policy. Teneile shared that the word "code" is no longer being used because it has a penalizing connotation to it. Additionally, they noted the importance of thinking about how the policy is affecting students, and whether it is serving its purpose. They also emphasized that it is key to have one policy for all schools.

Teneile also shared that many steps can be taken if students are violating the policy. For example, a student can turn a shirt around if it is offensive in some way. Students do not need to be automatically sent home. They also shared the importance of students supporting each other if they feel there is unfair treatment taking place.

Once again, there was a discussion about the Right to Read program. This included a discussion of the importance of teaching phonics, sounds, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary. There will be a "universal screener" related to reading, with the measurement being whether students are at risk or not at risk in terms of learning to read. If a student is at risk, assessments can be done to get more information about their skill level, and then engage in interventions.

In terms of Right to Read initiatives for ACE students, there will be extra staffing in some schools, including reading resource teachers to support extra reading initiatives, particularly for students struggling with letters and sounds. Staff is also receiving instruction in how to support students.

The next SEAC meeting will take place Wednesday, September 14, 2022.

SEAC Updates

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

The WCDSB SEAC met in person at the Catholic Education Centre on June 1. This was our first in-person meet since March 2020 and it was wonderful to be able to be together.

Erin Lemak, Principal of Student Services & Education and Community Partnership Programs, shared the updated Special Education Plan 2022/2023. SEAC had reviewed the plan in detail over several meetings making suggested changes and additions which were incorporated into the presented updated plan. There was an opportunity for related questions and answers. SEAC approved a motion to recommend to the Board of Trustees that the Special Education Plan 2022/2023 be approved as presented at the SEAC meeting.

We are hoping to add new community organizations to the committee this year as it is an election year. Several suggestions were shared on ways to reach out to community organizations.

Remaining Pro Grant funds will be spent on copies of Paul Davis' book and a pdf document of Top Online Safety Tips for Grades 3 – 8 with the author's permission.

Association updated were shared.

Trustees Jeanne Gravelle and Tracey Weiler shared updates from the May 30 board meeting. Those updates can be found here: <https://www.wcdsb.ca/wcdsb-board-meeting-bulletin-may-2022/>

The next WCDSB SEAC meeting will be on September 7. Topic ideas for the coming year will be discussed at the September meeting.

Wishing you a safe and happy summer!

Thoughts for Summer

Carmen Sutherland, Coffee Club Coordinator

Many people I know say they hate humidity. I agree, but not totally.

I remember the first time, in my memory, that my Saskatchewan-prairie-girl self felt the humidity of my new home in Illinois. I thought, "Well, this probably won't always feel great, but it does feel like summer."

The other day, sitting in my parking lot, I felt it again. Behind me, people were dance exercising in a community garden, and next door I could hear the thwack of others lawn bowling. And I grinned because it gave me memories of summers past. For me, summer means being outside as much as possible, milkshakes, summery books, beautiful night air and more.

Whatever summer means for you, enjoy it! Even if you cannot take a full vacation, perhaps you can take a bit of time out of each day for self-care. I heard someone say that self-care does not have to be complicated. The person said that it could be as simple as standing at the window with sun on your face. I think this is great advice.

I hope you have a fun, rejuvenating summer, whatever that looks like for you. And if it involves a summery treat, all the better!

What's Happening at WRFN

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



A NEW CHAPTER

This group is for family members & caregivers interested in preparing for the future of their youth/adult family member with a lifelong disability.

We have a new feature to our meetings called "Ask Us Anything" from 9-9:30pm.

This is a chance for those who attend the meeting to ask questions or clarify points when the main part of the meeting is over.

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



August 2, 2022

"Successes and Challenges – Stories from the Group"

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

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

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

For our August meeting, we will gather on Zoom at 7:30 on August 2 for "Successes and Challenges – Stories from the Group": come and share, or sit back and listen – everyone who would like to share will have a chance. More details to come in the August newsletter. Please RSVP to Mary Pike at maryjpike@hotmail.com.

What's Happening at WRFN

Ask A Self-Advocate

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

For more information on Ask A Self-Advocate please contact Cristina Stanger at Cristina.Stanger@wrfn.info.

Parent Mentor Program

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

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

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

School-Issue Parent Support Group

This peer-led group provides support, advice and a safe environment for parents who have questions or concerns about school issues affecting their children with special needs. The WRFN School Issues Support Group meets on the last Wednesday of each month during the school year. The next meeting will take place September 28.

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

WRFN's Family Resource Coach Team

During this current COVID-19 health crisis, personal support has become paramount for many families. Erin Sutherland and Sue Furey, our Family Resource Coaches, are available by phone, email, or virtual call to lend a helping hand and personal guidance to families and to connect you to updated information, resources, and virtual opportunities.

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

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

Coffee Club

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

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

Inclusive Summer Camps

Summer Camp Directory

If you missed out on the Virtual Camp Fairs that we held in partnership with KidsAbility, not to worry! KidsAbility has been collecting everything you need on its website.

For recordings of the previous sessions, please see the following links:

- Watch the [2022 Overnight Camp Fair](#) video
- Watch the [2022 Day Camps Fair for Children](#) video
- Watch the [2022 Camps for Teens & Adults Fair](#) video

KidsAbility also hosted Summer Camp Planning workshops to help families plan a successful summer camp experience for children with exceptionalities.

- Watch the [2022 Cambridge Summer Camp Planning Workshop](#) video
- Watch the [2022 Kitchener Waterloo Summer Camp Planning Workshop](#) video
- Watch the [2022 Guelph-Wellington Summer Camp Planning Workshop](#) video

To search through the Camp Directory for Summer 2022, please see the links below:

- [Overnight Summer Camps Across the Province - Children to Adults](#)
- [Day Camps for Children: Inclusive Day Camps \(age 4-12\)](#)
- [Day Camps, Programs, and Getaways for Teens and Adults](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Programs & Recreation

Conestoga College – Community Integration Through Cooperative Education (CICE)

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

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

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

Sensory Workout

Sensory workout is a program that combines what we know about exercise and sensory processing to make physical activity more accessible and enjoyable for all!

The Sensory Workout trainings and demo videos are created by Aptus' Clinical Services team, with generous funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Fun Fearless Females

Fun Fearless females is a social group to empower women of all abilities to live happy and healthy lives. Check out their July events:

- Ice Cream Social
 - July 8, 6:30-8:30 pm in Lori's backyard
- DIY Flower Art
 - July 15, 6:30-8:30 pm at West End Community Centre
- Tie Dye
 - July 22, 6:30-8:30 pm in Lori's backyard

There are also a handful of special events that will be happening throughout the summer like strawberry picking, trail hiking, a visit to a salt cave, picnics and beach days. Visit www.funfearlessfemales.ca/events for more info.

Email lori@funfearlessfemales.ca to register. Spots are limited.

Post-Pandemic Support & Resiliency Program for Children & Youth

St. James Anglican Church is running a free community program that will support vulnerable children and youth (age 5-17) in processing and healing from challenges faced during the last two years. The program will utilize a variety of therapeutic approaches; visual art, movement, yoga, social support, talking, listening and learning. Register at <https://stjamesang.ca/events/>.

Artshine Virtual Accessible Art For Kids, Teens & Adults

Social distancing doesn't need to rob you of the joy that comes from expanding your art skills! Artshine has live video lessons via Zoom for all ages. Art supplies will be mailed to you in advance of classes!

Maximum 20 participants for personalized attention.

[Click here](#) for more information!

Recreational Respite Virtual Services

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Bridges to Belonging

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

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

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

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

March of Dimes Connect & Share

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

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

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

CNIB's Virtual Program Offerings

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

ConnectABILITY's Friendly Connections

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

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

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

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.

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

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

Learn more at: goodlifekids.com/MOVE/

Kijengle

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region: Virtual Open Space

Looking to connect to folks on a weekly basis?

Join one of the virtual Open Spaces on Monday evenings! Both begin at 6:30pm.

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

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

Launch

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops & Training

CADDAC

Don't Underestimate Your Senses: Occupational Therapy Workshops

Sensory sensitivities are very commonly found among the ADHD population. However, they are not recognized as some of the key culprits to daily challenges. In this series of workshops for adults and parents of children with ADHD, we will introduce you to some of the most common sensory challenges, how they can show up in daily behaviours, and practical tools to address them. Both workshops are \$30 to attend.

Parent Workshop: Takes place July 6 at 7:30 pm.

Adult Workshop: Takes place July 13 at 7:30 pm.

Microboards Ontario

MBO 101: An Introduction to Microboards

What is a Microboard? Is it right for my family? What's involved in creating one? This workshop explores these issues and more. July 14, 26, Aug 12, or 23

Click here to register

MBO 102: Legal Aspects You Need To Know

This workshop explores how a microboard can offer a framework for legal and financial decision-making. July 19, Aug 4, 16, or 31

Click here to register

Inspiring Possibilities

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Resources

The Value of an Experiential Learning Model for Family Medicine Residents

Disability and Health Journal by Selick, et al.

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

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

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

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

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

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

System Navigator Anti-Black Racism for WRDSB

Phyllis Peprah is the System Navigator for the Waterloo District School Board. In this role Phyllis is dedicated to building trust between African, Caribbean and Black Students and Families and WRDSB. Phyllis is seeking to engage African, Caribbean and Black families living in Cambridge who may not be well connected to resources and supports in the community. phyllis_peprah@wrdsb.ca 519 570 0003 ext. 4270.

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

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Ontario Caregiver Association

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

Resources from Inclusion Canada

Pathways to Home Ownership — The Pathways to Homeownership project demonstrated inclusive models of homeownership and created resources to help people with disabilities (and their families) purchase their own homes. Inclusion Canada is currently working on new resources to support Pathways. It will be coming soon.

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

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

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

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

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

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

The Family Support Network for Employment

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

You Don't Have to Do this Alone - Parents for Children's Mental Health

If you are a parent/caregiver worried about your child, or a young person looking for help yourself – please reach out. Our network of child and youth mental health centres has 4,000 professionals ready to help children, youth and families with free counselling and treatment. We provide care in person, on the phone and virtually. No problem is too big or small.

Find your closest child and youth mental health centre here:

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

March of Dimes Hi, Tech!

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

Take5

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

Visit the [Take5 website](#).

Shared Connections: Inclusive and Accessible Tech Support

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

www.sharedconnections.ca

Information, Opportunities & Resources

The Vulnerable Persons Registry

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

www.vulnerablepersonsregistry.ca

KidsAbility Resources

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

ConnectAbility.ca COVID-19 Resources

Supporting individuals, families and caregivers.

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

Family Compass Waterloo Region

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

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

Fostering Information from Family & Children Services

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Support Groups

Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (WWDSS)

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

Transgender Partners and Friends Peer Support Group

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

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

The Waterloo Wellington Perth Chapter of PFLAG invites you to attend our support group focusing on topics of interest to parents, family and friends of LGBTQ individuals.

PFLAG Canada is Canada's only national organization that helps all Canadians with issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

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

Chronic Pain Monthly Support Group

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Preemie Parents of Waterloo-Wellington

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

Visit: <https://www.cpbfbfpc.org/covid19>

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support, formally known as The Black Parent & Caregiver Support Group (BPSG) was created to provide a safe space for families of African descent to come together to meet and connect, share resources, expertise and needs, inspire and support one another through our unique and often challenging and isolating journey of raising Black children or supporting a sibling, of any age, with a disability. Sawubona is a Zulu greeting. It literally means "I see you." More than words of politeness, sawubona carries the importance of recognizing the worth and dignity of each person.

Location/Meetings: This is a volunteer-run group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. via ZOOM. There will be guest speakers, resource sharing, support and mentorship opportunities for attendees.

Contact: For more details or to register, please contact us at bpsgroup2020@gmail.com.

The A-Team of Waterloo Region

The A-Team of Waterloo Region is primarily run by individuals with Asperger's Syndrome, for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome, with some assistance from Bridges to Belonging. Their goal is to create a safe and welcoming environment to meet fellow adults (age 18+) with Asperger's Syndrome (ASD – level 1), discuss topics of interest, share experiences, and embrace their neurological diversity.

Please go to <https://ateamwaterlooregion.wordpress.com/about/> for more information on how to register and attend the upcoming virtual meetings!

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Super Dads Super Kids

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

Participate in fun activities with your child(ren). When: Thursdays, 7:30-8:30 pm or Saturdays 9:30-10:30 am. Where: Zoom

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

Groups from Muslim Social Services

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

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

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario

The Association of Parent Support Groups in Ontario (APSGO) is for parents struggling with the behavior of a child, youth or young adult.

APSGO support groups help parents/guardians develop effective strategies, set limits and boundaries, and build better relationships with their children.

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

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

Strong Moms, Safe Kids

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

South Asian Wellness Group

The South Asian Wellness Group is a drop-in group every Thursday from 3 pm to 4:30 pm. With a South Asian Peer Facilitator fluent in Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu, this group will focus on coping, recovery, and fostering hope from a South Asian lens. This group is intended for folks who identify as South Asian to connect and build community with one another. ALL Self Help & Peer Support groups are open to adults living in Waterloo Wellington communities who identify as living with mental health or/and substance use issues. To join this group or if you have questions about it, please send us an email: selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca. To view this information in Punjabi, [please click here](#).

CIA - Connecting, Interests and Activities

There's an all-new group in Waterloo Region for adults (18+) with Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) level 1. The purpose of the group is to create a safe and supportive space for people to have fun, meet and connect with others, and take part in activities. Join if you're looking for a positive place of belonging!

Meetings take place at the Downtown Community Centre (35 B Weber Street West), in the Multi-Purpose Room. This is a drop-in group, so folks are welcome to join anytime between 5 and 7 pm. Parking passes are available at the front desk. Just mention you are joining the group in the Multi-Purpose Room. In the case that the community centre doors are locked, please use the white button on the wall next to the left of the door labelled 'Main Office Buzzer' or call Kelly at the number below.

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

Parents for Children's Mental Health Virtual Peer Support Group (PCMH)

Please note that PCMH's ADHD group is taking a break for July and August, but their other general support group is continuing. Parents/caregivers who normally attend the ADHD group are welcome to attend the General group over the summer.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Engagement Opportunities

McMaster University Research on Postpartum Depression Treatment

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

State of employment for individuals with a developmental disability in Ontario

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

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TS7ZJBJ>

Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions

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

Specific dates and times for focus groups are:

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

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

Advocacy Kit for Increasing Special Services at Home

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

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

CAMH

- *Virtual Healthcare Study for Patients with Developmental Disabilities*

During COVID-19 there has been a huge increase in the delivery of virtual primary care. CAMH is conducting interviews (online or by phone) to learn what is working well and what needs to be improved to support high quality care for patients with developmental disabilities. Interested or want to learn more? Contact Avra Selick at avra.selick@camh.ca or 416-535-8501x30127

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interested individuals can email: PLANLab@uoguelph.ca or call 519-824-4120 ext. 53622.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Inclusion Canada

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

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

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

Infant and Child Mental Health Lab at York University

The Infant and Child Mental Health Lab at York University is inviting caregivers and their infants (aged 3 to 10 months), to participate in a 2-part online research study. The first part examines caregiver-infant interaction at times when the caregiver is busy with common, everyday tasks. The second part examines the role of caregivers' experiences as they interact with their infants. To learn more about our study, please visit our webpage: <https://bohr.lab.yorku.ca/participate-in-our-studies/>

Interested participants can email us directly at yorkparentingproject@gmail.com, or sign up using the form on our webpage.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Community News

Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT)

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

Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB)

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

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