

Where exceptional families thrive

178

March 2025

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What's In This Issue?

As we shake off the winter blues and look forward to the arrival of spring, we find ourselves eagerly anticipating nature's awakening. Just as animals and flowers emerge from their cold slumber, so do we! March brings not only the promise of warmer days but also March Break for our kids—a perfect time for laughter and play.

We are thrilled to announce that **Early Bird tickets for our 10th Anniversary Evening of Elegance are now available!** This special edition event is a heartfelt celebration of all those who help us thrive at WRFN. Thanks to your generous support, we raised an impressive **\$41,923.52** through our recent appeal. We cannot thank you enough for your contributions!

In addition to our anniversary celebration, we want to highlight two important workshops designed to support families. Join us for our **Transitions Workshop on March 19, from 6 - 8 pm, at The Family Centre.** This session will cover navigating various transitions within the school system for students with exceptional needs, including activity changes, school transitions, and social challenges.

Then, on March 25, in partnership with the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB), Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB), and we invite you to our Parent and Student Information Evening called "**Starting Together.**" A panel will discuss how to support your child with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) as they make the journey to high school.

At WRFN, our mission is to connect families of children with exceptionalities and self-advocates to the support and resources they need. We envision a community where every family feels valued and empowered. In this edition of the Family Pulse, we hope these offerings inspire you to engage with the spirit of spring and strengthen the bonds within our community.

Please Note the "*" represents new items for March



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

During our recent discussion, we addressed the need for a consultation on the Student Mental Health and Addiction Strategy. We also reviewed Policy and Program Memorandum 169, which stipulates that every school must implement a comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy along with a one-year action plan.

In terms of the needs of students, we talked about several key points. First, students expressed the importance of feeling that their voices are being heard, including those who are non-verbal. We emphasized the necessity of good communication between educators and students, ensuring that students know whom they can approach when they need help. Additionally, we highlighted the value of students learning from each other and the potential for peer mental health support, particularly from leadership students in the Alternative Curriculum of Education (ACE) classrooms, as well as from peers across different schools.

For families and caregivers, we brainstormed ideas for offering support beyond traditional lunch hours. We discussed the importance of being mindful of how to provide assistance to parents and caregivers in intense caregiving situations, suggesting that it is often best to keep communications brief when appropriate.

We also acknowledged that February is Psychology Month. This month, we are focusing on various issues related to how psychologists serve students, including addressing mental health concerns, helping to understand why students may be struggling, identifying areas of personal strengths and needs, and assisting students in advocating for themselves.

Furthermore, we had a conversation about how to better explain Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to parents. One idea proposed was to create pamphlets to clarify the process and purpose of IEPs.

The Service Animals Policy was another topic of discussion. For more information, individuals can refer to the following links:

- [Support for Service Animals in WRSB Schools](#)
- [Use of Service Animals by Students](#)
- [Use of Service Dogs](#)

Finally, we announced that the next SEAC meeting will take place virtually on March 5, 2025.

SEAC Updates

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

On Wednesday, February 5, the WCDSB SEAC hosted the event titled "**Grace for All: Preparing for the Sacraments for Those with Special Needs.**" During this event, families participated in a brief liturgy before being introduced to the new Adaptive Sacramental Prep boxes that were purchased by the school board. Attendees had the opportunity to open and explore the contents of each box, which included preparation materials for Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. Each sacrament was packaged separately with fun and engaging materials designed to support the preparation process.

The next meeting will take place on March 5.

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
March 4	EarlyON Roger St 161 Roger St, Waterloo	10-11 am
March 5	EarlyON Riverside 250 William Street, Elmira	10-11 am
March 12	EarlyON Cedar Creek 55 Hilltop Dr, Ayr, ON	10-11 am
March 18	EarlyON St. Boniface 225 Starlight Ave, Breslau	10-11 am
March 19	EarlyON Oak Creek 80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener	10-11 am
March 25	EarlyON Water St 73 Water St., N., Unit 105 Cambridge	10-11 am



Contact Lisa -

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

More dates to come!



www.wrfn.info



Coffee Club Blog Post

by Carmen Sutherland

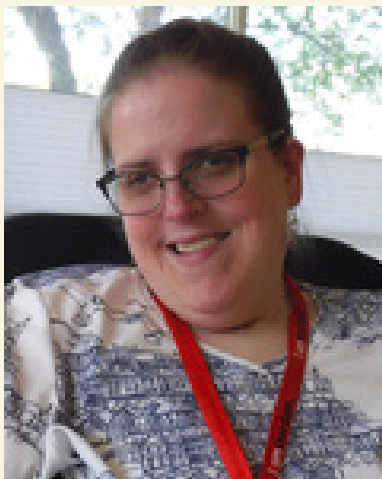
Hi All,

It's Carmen, your friendly Coffee Club Facilitator checking in to say that both in-person and Zoom Coffee Club are going great these days! In the last few months on Monday nights we have carved pumpkins, had a potluck, decorated cookies and aprons, and done mocktails and painting. On Zoom, we have been talking and laughing every Thursday. Lots of new friends have joined us, and as usual, we have welcomed them with open arms.

I am honoured to be part of the Coffee Club community because of how accepting we are of new people and how we love to help each other. If you are 16 or older, you are more than welcome to come join our wonderful community. There is no fee to join - but everyone pays for themselves when we are out in the community or doing an activity that costs money. I always take ideas from the community of fun activities we can do as well.

Come be a part of the club that doesn't drink coffee, and make some great friends!

Carmen Sutherland
Coffee Club Facilitator
Carmen.Sutherland@wrfn.info



Thank you for Supporting WRFN's Finding Relief in Support Campaign

The Finding Relief in Support campaign **raised an incredible \$41,923.52** through our recent appeal, and we cannot thank you enough for your contributions! It has been one of the most successful campaigns in WRFN's 15-year history, and we have each of you to thank for that. Your kindness, generosity, and trust in our mission have fueled this incredible achievement. To everyone who has donated, shared our message, or cheered us on—you are part of something truly special.

We are especially grateful for the two incredible \$10,000 matching donations, including the Matthew MacGregor Charitable Giving Fund and an anonymous donor. Because of their generosity, we successfully met the matching challenge, doubling the impact of these gifts and reinforcing the strength of our community. Your support reminds us that we are never alone in this work. Each contribution carries the love and commitment of those who believe in creating a more connected, inclusive community.

Reflecting on this campaign's success, we recognize that the journey does not end here. Winter can be an especially difficult time for many families and individuals facing disabilities and mental health challenges, but your support has ensured that no one feels alone. Because of you, we can continue offering critical programs, connections, and resources that make a lasting difference in the lives of families and individuals in our community.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for standing with us, for believing in the power of connection, and for being part of our WRFN family. Your generosity and kindness inspire us every day, and we are excited for what the future holds as we continue this journey together.

With gratitude,

The Waterloo Region Family Network Team



Thank You!

Your Support Helped those with exceptional needs and their families by raising:

\$ 41,923.52

**Finding Relief
in Support**

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

 WATERLOO REGION
Family Network

WRFN's Next School Navigation Workshop

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

TRANSITIONS WORKSHOP

- **March 19, 6:30 - 8 pm**
- **The Family Centre (65 Hanson Ave, Kitchener)**
- **Teaching parents/caregivers the various transitions within the school for students with exceptional needs (activity changes, school transitions and social challenges)**

Waterloo Region Family Network

Email info@wrfn.info to register

Email info@wrfn.info to secure your spot today!

Get ready for a night of elegance and excitement at the **10th Annual Evening of Elegance on April 25, 2025!** Join us at **Federation Hall** for an unforgettable evening where we celebrate not just a decade of our signature fundraising event, but also **15 amazing years of WRFN.**

Picture yourself mingling with friends, sipping exquisite wine, and indulging in delightful tasting stations, all while supporting a cause that connects and uplifts families in need. With a classy New Year's theme, dress to impress and let your sparkle shine as we create magical memories together! Don't miss out—grab your early bird tickets now and be part of this fantastic celebration!

[**Official Event Page**](#)
[**Buy Early Bird Tickets**](#)



Waterloo Region Family Network Presents the

10TH *Evening of Elegance*

EARLY BIRD TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

*Early bird pricing of \$125 per ticket until March 14!
 prices will increase to \$150 per ticket after this date

Let's Toast to...

15 *Years*
 SUPPORTING FAMILIES



WATERLOO REGION
Family Network

Join us for our Annual Signature Fundraising Event

Friday	APRIL 25, 2025
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Federation Hall
 200 University Avenue West, Waterloo

DOORS OPEN 7 PM

Sponsors











SPECTRUM ON THE SPECTRUM

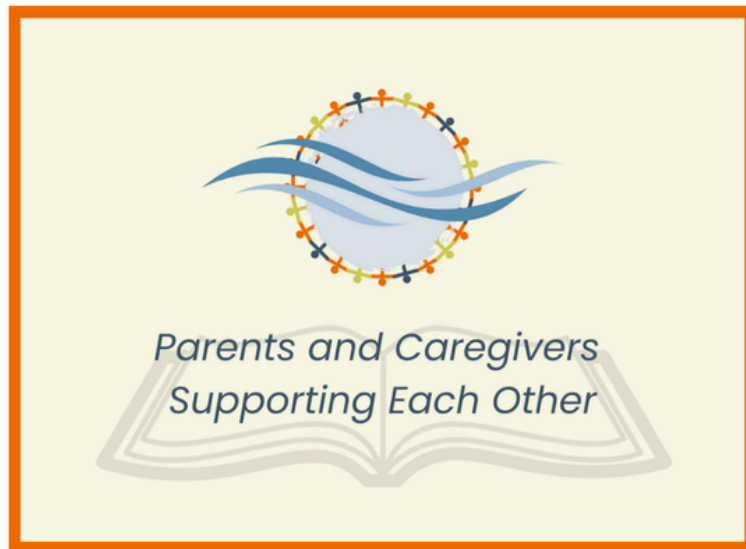
NEW DAY!
THE FIRST SUNDAY
OF EACH MONTH
6:30-8:30PM

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.



March 4, 2025

The Sibling Perspective

ANC met on Tuesday, March 4 at 7:30 PM for a presentation on The Sibling Perspective.. They heard from Helen Ries of Siblings Canada and Dr. Pamela Block from Western University, both of whom have personal experiences caring for siblings with disabilities and have researched the sibling experience.

Their insights were invaluable as we explored how to support siblings in our families and ensure everyone is set up for success when parents can no longer provide care. attendees were encouraged to invite the siblings in their families to participate, whether for this meeting or as regular members of ANC

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 maryjpik@hotmail.com and ask to be put on our email list.



Caring Circles



Parent and Caregiver Support Group

This weekly peer-led support group is for parents/caregivers of children and youth with special needs. Facilitated by Lisa Cook from Waterloo Region Family Network (WRFN), conversations will include real-life experiences, tips, and strategies along with information sharing.

- Monday mornings from **10:00 AM - 11:30 AM**
- Chicopee-Centreville Community Centre: 141 Morgan Ave
- January 20 - March 24
- FREE
- Register online at kitchener.ca/ActiveNet code 167049 or in-person at the community centre.

For more information contact:

Nathan.moore@kitchener.ca or 519-741-2490

TTY (system for deaf or hard of hearing callers):

1-866-969-9994



STARTING TOGETHER:

A PARENT & STUDENT INFORMATION EVENING

Transition to High School for Students with Individual Education Plans

Join us for a panel discussion with school board personnel on how to support Grade 7 and 8 students as they prepare for high school!

Tues. March 25, 2025
6:30 – 8 pm

Waterloo Catholic District School Board Education Centre
Board Room 35 Weber St. W., Unit A, Kitchener ON

To register, please email info@wrfn.info



This event is offered by WRFN in partnership with WRDSB and WCDSB as part of a working group through the ASD Collaborative.

Email info@wrfn.info to secure your spot today!



**A Canvas for Connection:
the Waterloo Region Family Network Creates!**

Presented by the Waterloo Region Family Network and
Stepping Stones Expressive Arts

Session 1: February 23, 1 - 4 pm The Family Centre
Session 2: March 23, 1 - 4 pm 65 Hanson Ave, Kitchener
Session 3: April 13, 1 - 4 pm

Exhibition: May 23, 4 - 7 pm KW Art Gallery
101 Queen St. North, Kitchener

Email to register:
Steppingstonesarts@gmail.com

Join us for a series of three half-day workshops exploring disability themes through artistic expression. Open to individuals with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. Engage in guided art-making, access a variety of supplies, and connect with the community.





Keith and Winifred Shantz
Fund for the Arts

Register now for any or all remaining seasons to secure your spot! Participants are asked to register by the Wednesday before their chosen Sunday, or they can register for the full series during their first contact. Contact

steppingstonesarts@gmail.com.

Please provide a contact email, phone number, and number of participants, and note information about sensitivities to materials or accommodations needed. **Register your spot today!**

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: Social Club Events – Fun for Ages 16+*

Get Ready for an exciting lineup of social events this March at the Community of Hearts Lifelong Learning Centre! Whether you're looking to enjoy a movie day, indulge in delicious Asian cuisine, celebrate St. Patrick's Day, or showcase your karaoke skills, we've got you covered.

Highlights include:

- Red Papaya for Lunch on March 9 - Savor a mouthwatering Asian-inspired feast for \$40.
- St. Patrick's Day Party on March 16 - Join the fun with green-themed snacks, activities, and dancing for \$5.
- Karaoke at the Centre on March 23 - Sing your heart out and have a blast with your peers for \$5.

All events take place in the City of Guelph. Register by phone at 519-826-9056 or email info@communityofhearts.ca. Program fees are Passport Funding friendly.

KW Habilitation's YEP (Youth Exploring Possibilities) Social program*

Take-Out and Trivia Night on Tuesday

The YEP Social program is hosting a Take-Out and Trivia Night on Tuesday, March 18 from 6 pm to 8 pm. Join the group for a night of enjoying take-out food and playing a trivia tournament with friends.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Laser Tag and Arcade

On Monday, March 31 from 9 am to 4 pm, join the fun with YEP Social today as they take a trip to KingPin arcade in Cambridge! You will be able to game with friends and play a few missions of laser tag. Lunch and snacks are provided. The price for the day is \$140.

Spring Cake Pops

On Tuesday, April 15, from 6 to 8 pm, attendees will have the opportunity to bake and decorate their own cake pops to celebrate the spring season.

Movie Theatre PD Day

On Friday, May 30 from 9 am to 4 pm, Participants can spend their PD Day watching the latest blockbuster movie and hanging out with friends.

Making Mac N' Cheese Casserole

On Tuesday, May 20, from 6 to 8 pm, attendees can come together and make a delicious baked mac and cheese casserole.

The YEP Social program is open to youth ages 13-25. Interested individuals can contact yep@kwhab.ca or to register, [visit here](#).

KW Habilitation Youth Exploring Possibilities: Kitchen Masters

KW Habilitation's Kitchen Masters program is designed for young adults aged 13-25 to develop essential cooking and kitchen safety skills. This engaging three-part series covers healthy eating, knife safety, and kitchen hazard navigation. The program takes place at Bullas Hall - KW Habilitation (99 Ottawa Street South, Kitchener) and costs \$215.

Upcoming Sessions:

Healthy Habits 101 – Thursday, March 6, 6 pm - 7:30 pm

Explore the world of healthy eating, discover food groups, and learn to make nutritious choices using the Canada Food Guide.

Kitchen Safety 1: Handling Knives Safely – Thursday, March 20, 6 pm - 7:30 pm

Learn essential safety techniques to handle sharp knives and kitchen tools confidently.

Kitchen Safety 2: Navigating Kitchen Hazards – Thursday, March 27, 6 pm - 7:30 pm

Develop skills to safely work in the kitchen, handling hazards like hot stoves and minor burns.

For more details or to register, contact yep@kwhab.ca or visit kwhab.ca

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence: Virtual Mindfulness for Leadership and Frontline Professionals Program

Are you a leader, manager, or supervisor employed at an agency that provides support to individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in Canada? If so, you can join our 6-week virtual mindfulness program designed specifically for leadership and frontline professionals in health, home care, and disability support services. This program is being offered through the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) with the support of the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence. Mindfulness expert Sue Hutton, MSW, will lead the sessions and provide you with valuable tools and resources to support your practice. The program will run on the following dates in 2025:

- Tuesday, May 6 to Jun 10, 1 - 1:45 pm
- Thursday, Oct 9 to Nov 13, 12:30 - 1:15 pm

Participation is free; audio links and additional resources will be provided to support your ongoing mindfulness practice. To learn more and express your interest, please fill out the study form at the link or

<https://redcap.link/ecdgehrw> If you have any additional questions, you can email hcardd@camh.ca.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence: Mindfulness Programs for Family Caregivers Across Canada

Join a six-week program for family caregivers of loved ones with disabilities, those who are aging, and those experiencing a challenging illness. Mindfulness expert Sue Hutton, MSW, will lead the program sessions. Audio links and resources will be provided to support your mindfulness practice. The good news is that there is no cost to participate in the program.

The program runs between the following 2025:

- Friday, May 9 to Friday, June 13, 1 - 2 pm
- Tuesday, October 7 to Tuesday, November 11, 1 - 2 pm

To sign up, please click the <https://redcap.link/cqkbctj5> or email hcardd@camh.ca. This program is offered through the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) with the support of the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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 [here](#) or by phone 519-743-0271 x261.

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>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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/>.

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: Youth ADHD Group Coaching Program: 16-24 years: 8-week program from April to June 2025*

In this dynamic and engaging program, you'll not only learn more about ADHD and the impact it can have on your life, but also you'll gain tools and techniques to set yourself up for success and learn how to grow from past experiences so you can achieve your goals. Grounded in Positive Psychology, this program will help you develop your own toolkit of skills and behaviours that will help you create the life you want. Together, you work on living with ADHD, managing emotions, time, and money, self-advocacy your own personal goal plan.

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada: Understanding Your Child's ADHD Diagnosis: Introductory Program for Parents*

This program begins on March 26, 2025, and concludes on April 9, 2025. This three-week program will provide parents with essential insights into understanding their child's ADHD diagnosis. The cost for participation is \$30 plus GST. The program serves as a first step for parents who have a newly diagnosed child. Throughout the course, you will gain a clear understanding of the basics of ADHD, including how it may manifest in your child's behaviour at home and in school settings. please visit [here](#).

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

Free Virtual Workshop Series: Create Your Individualized Housing and Support Plan*

A free virtual workshop series hosted by Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) aims to assist individuals with developmental disabilities in creating personalized housing and support plans. This engaging three-session series will cover essential topics such as creating a vision, discovering strengths and needs, documenting support requirements, and exploring how technology can enhance independence. Participants will also learn about various housing options, self-funding opportunities, and how to set measurable goals. The workshops will take place on Tuesdays, March 11, 18, and 25, 2025, from 10:00 am to 12:15 pm EST. Attendance at all sessions is highly recommended, as each builds on the previous one. This event is open to individuals with developmental disabilities, their family members, and support networks in Ontario. For inquiries, contact Bambi Pepe at b.pepe@lccare.ca or Tanner Stranges at housing@dsohnr.ca. To register for the workshop series, please visit the [DSO Calendar](#).

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 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 is scheduled for 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!](#)

Free Tax Clinic Information Program*

Free Tax Clinic: A service for individuals with modest income and simple tax situations, offering assistance in filing tax returns at no cost. Community organizations across Canada host these clinics through the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) and the Income Tax Assistance - Volunteer Program (ITAVP) in Quebec.

Types of Clinics:

- Walk-in: No appointment is needed; first come, first served during advertised hours.
- Drop-off: Drop off tax documents during advertised hours; pick up completed returns later.
- By Appointment: Schedule a time for filing taxes, which can be in-person or virtual.
 - In-person: A volunteer assists you at a scheduled time.
 - Virtual: A volunteer assists you via videoconference or phone.
 - Virtual – Northern Communities: For residents in prescribed zones, volunteers assist via videoconference or phone.

For more information on choosing or finding a tax clinic or to check your eligibility for virtual options, visit the following link: [Canada Revenue Agency - Tax Clinics](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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.

Student Links Program: Application and FAQ (Link updated and working*)

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 identify ideas, interests, passions, and roles they are interested in. [Fill out an application form here](#), and [visit here](#) to see some frequently asked questions.

FACS Waterloo's Creative Space and Mini Act Theatre Programs*

The Creative Space program, hosted by local community artist Pamela, runs on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6-7:30 pm. This program allows youth to explore a variety of art and craft materials to create their own unique projects. The Monday sessions are for youth who are comfortable attending without a caregiver, while the Wednesday sessions welcome younger youth and those who would like a caregiver present. Additionally, FACS Waterloo offers the Mini Act Theatre program, hosted by Yazan with extensive film and drama experience. This program runs every Thursday from 6-8 pm. It provides a safe and expressive environment for youth interested in the dramatic arts. Registration is required for all participants. Interested individuals can access the [FACSW and Resilience Programs Referral Form here](#) to sign up. If you have any questions or need support with the registration process, please reach out directly.

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.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Virtual Courses: Brain Health and Aging in Adults with IDD Brain Health-IDD Research Study

Camh is looking for participants to help us evaluate virtual education programs designed to promote healthy aging in older Canadian adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. There are three programs available:

Adults with IDD Program is for adults with a developmental disability aged 40+. It runs Tuesdays, March 25 - May 6, 1:30 - 3 pm.

Service Provider ECHO Program is for health and social service providers supporting adults aged 40+ with developmental disabilities. Runs Fridays, May 2 - June 6, 11:30 AM-1 pm.

To learn more and express your interest, please fill out the study form at [this link](#). For any additional questions, you can email brainhealthIDD@camh.ca.

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>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Workshops/Events

Bridges to Belonging: Future Planning Webinar*

Bridges to Belonging is hosting an important Future Planning webinar this March featuring Dr. Sandy Shamon as the speaker. The webinar will take place on Thursday, March 6, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Dr. Shamon will lead a discussion on Advance Care Planning, a vital process that facilitates knowledge sharing and decision-making between individuals, their chosen decision-makers, and healthcare providers, ensuring that future healthcare choices reflect personal values and comply with the Health Care Consent Act. Attendees can register for the event [here](#). Additionally, participants who stay until the end of one or both sessions and enter their name in the chat box will have a chance to win a \$1,250 + HST + Disbursements gift certificate for setting up a will and power of attorney for two people, generously donated by Gurminder Singh at GGFI Law. Don't miss this valuable opportunity for future planning!

Exploring the Intersectionality of Disability and Race: Advancing Equity and Inclusion*

Join the EDI Knowledge Transfer Committee for an important session titled "Exploring the Intersectionality of Disability and Race: Advancing Equity and Inclusion," designed for REAL Xchange members. Scheduled for Thursday, March 6th, 2025, at 1:00 PM, this presentation will delve into how the intersection of race and disability impacts access to services, opportunities, and support for individuals. Esteemed representatives from Race and Disability Canada and ODEN will provide valuable resources and toolkits to facilitate meaningful discussions on this crucial topic. The session will also include a focused dialogue on applying these insights to enhance employment service supports. Accessibility features such as Closed Captioning and Live Transcription will be available during the webinar. Don't miss this opportunity to deepen understanding and contribute to advancing equity and inclusion—[register now!](#)

Information, Opportunities & Resources

KW Habilitation: St Patrick's Day Dance*

Get ready to dance the night away at KW Habilitation's St. Patrick's Day Dance on March 19, 2025, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Bridgeport Community Centre, located at 20 Tyson Drive, Kitchener. Wear your best green gear and enjoy an evening filled with music, prizes, a photo booth, and snacks! Tickets are available for \$20 each, with 120 tickets total, and registration opens on March 3 on the KWH Shop at shop.kwhab.ca. The Outspoken Dance Committee leads the event; if you need support for personal care or safety, please bring a support person who also has a ticket. Photos and videos will be taken, so let the team know if you prefer not to be included. All proceeds support the Outspoken Self Advocates, a self-advocacy group at KW Habilitation. For questions, contact Amanda at aneely@kwhab.ca.

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

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 pocus 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

<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](#).

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](#)

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](#).

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 \(access2card.ca\)](http://Access2 - Easter Seals Canada Access 2 Entertainment Program (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/>

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

Kitchener Public Library: Access to Technology Programs

Chromebook Borrowing: Community members can now borrow Chromebooks from the library for a one-week loan period, available at all five library locations.

Daisy Readers with Digital Content: The library has added Daisy reader machines with enhanced navigation, including Victor Stratus and Victor Stream devices that can play Daisy audio discs and digital content. Staff can pre-load devices with a mix of titles based on customer reading profiles.

Yoto Mini Collection: The library has a collection of 13 Yoto Mini audio players, which use colorful plastic-coated cards to play audiobooks for children from birth to 12 years old.

Additionally, the library's Visiting Library Service provides monthly delivery of library materials to Kitchener residents who cannot visit the library in person.

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.](#)

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

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 \(planningnetwork.ca\)](http://planningnetwork.ca)

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 offer a monthly ADHD support group. 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 have a look at 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.

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](#).

Help Shape the Future of FASD Support in Ontario*

Have you used the [FASDinfoTSAF.ca](#) website, attended FASD training for service providers, or participated in FASD support groups? Health Nexus is seeking your feedback on our FASD programs to help improve support for individuals and families across Ontario. Share your thoughts in our anonymous survey [here](#) and help shape the future of FASD support in the province. Your input makes a difference.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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

News

Canada Disability Benefit Regulations Have Been Made*

Today, the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Kamal Khara, announced that the Canada Disability Benefit Regulations have been made and will come into force on May 15, 2025. This is the final step in the Government of Canada's legislative work to make the Canada Disability Benefit a reality. More information on the Canada Disability Benefit, including a summary of the regulations, is available at the following links:

- [Statement from the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities on the Canada Disability Benefit](#)
- [Canada Disability Benefit](#)
- [Summary of the Canada Disability Benefit Regulations](#)

Please note that the final Canada Disability Benefit Regulations and the related Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement will be published in Part II of the Canada Gazette in the coming weeks. We will inform you once the regulations have been published. Please also note that the application process for the Canada Disability Benefit is not yet open. The Government will provide details on the application process in the coming months, including when, where, and how to apply. As announced in Budget 2024, the Government is committed to begin payment of the Canada Disability Benefit in July 2025.