

Where exceptional families thrive.

Issue 133
May 2021

What's In This Issue?

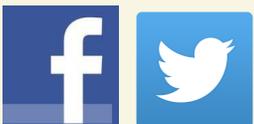
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Happy spring! I hope you've all been enjoying the longer days and beautiful sunshine.

Despite the uncertainty around us, we continue to see our community respond with a variety of opportunities delivered in new ways. Check out the number of learning opportunities and programs, both within WRFN and our community.

Please join us for Evening of Elegance @home. Tickets are now available until May 7. Your support is greatly appreciated and we hope to see you, and your friends and family online!



Support WRFN Today

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

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Region District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee Update

Submitted by Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region District School Board Representative

Superintendent Scott Miller gave several updates. Students began remote learning as of April 19, including ACE students. Students will have devices to work with at home. In terms of funding, the Board has received funding to re-implement many of the programs that were in place last summer, including intense reading interventions for Grade 7 and 8 students, with between one and 12 students per teacher. There will also be interventions for students in Grade 1 and 2, with one teacher for every four students. There will also be a class for students transitioning from Grade 8 to Grade 9 about executive functioning and organization.

There was also a brief discussion about the presentation from Cristina Stanger, who presented on being a parent with an exceptionality. It was noted that her ideas could help parents with exceptionalities but all parents could benefit. SEAC broke into groups to brainstorm ideas for how to better act on Cristina's thoughts in order to begin working toward a letter of suggestion to the Board.

There was discussion of the 2021-2026 Board Accommodation Plan. Equity needs to be ensured in many areas, including serving everyone involved in the Board, and making sure families and staff see themselves represented. There must be equity in employment, and support for diverse candidates through the employment process. Other planned improvements include making student records more accessible and streamlined, and making it easier for parents to meet virtually. In terms of the physical environment, schools are making great strides toward becoming more accessible, including accessible restrooms with change tables, and amplification for students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. As for systemic improvements, the Board continues to make transportation accessible, including configuring bussing so that all students can ride together. The Board is continually working to increase equity for all through learning opportunities and responding to any concerns that may arise.

The next WRDSB SEAC meeting will be held virtually on May 12, 2021.

Waterloo Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee Update

Submitted by Sue Simpson and Karen Kovats, WRFN SEAC Representatives

WCDSB SEAC met virtually on April 7. Cristina Stanger, Self-Advocacy Liaison with Waterloo Region Family Network (WRFN) joined Sue Simpson, Executive Director of WRFN to present on overview about the organization. Cristina also shared about her experiences as a parent with exceptional needs – sharing barriers experienced in being able to support her children in their education journeys as well as helpful suggestions that could benefit many parents in the future. Cristina's presentation was well received and appreciated.

Gerald Foran, Superintendent, shared information on Policy and Procedures for Special Education in Ontario.

Association updates were shared.

The next WCDSB SEAC meeting will be held virtually on May 19.

Evening of Elegance @home

Evening of Elegance @home

IN SUPPORT OF WATERLOO REGION FAMILY NETWORK

Join us for this family-friendly cooking event in partnership with The Culinary Studio

Your ticket includes

- Menu: Schwarma Marinated Chicken, Spiced 'Sharia' Rice, NYC White Sauce, Hot Pink Pickled Cabbage & Chocolate loaf
- a basket of fresh ingredients delivered to your door (Feeds family of 4)
- a bottle of wine
- an interactive, step-by-step cooking class

Saturday,
May 29, 2021
5-8pm

For Dietary restrictions to be honoured, please email Leah at leah.bowman@wrfn.info by May 7.

Tickets \$200/household

Tickets available at

<https://bit.ly/3rCL5wm>

Ticket sales end May 7



All proceeds remain local and go directly to supporting exceptional families to help them thrive.

What's Happening at WRFN



A NEW CHAPTER

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

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

APRIL 6, 2021
*Imagining Better –
 Creating our vision of
 home beyond the family
 home*

MAY 4, 2021
*Housing Stories of
 Success*

JUNE 1, 2021
*Art with Stepping Stones
 Expressive Arts*

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

RSVP to Mary at
 maryjpike@hotmail.com
 if you would like to join



What's Happening at WRFN

All WRFN programs will be offered in virtual format or through phone and email connections until further notice.

At WRFN, we're here to listen. Please reach out and let us know how we can help you and your family during these challenging times.

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. To request a booking please complete the [request form](#).

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.

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.

If you would like to learn more please contact Sue Simpson at Sue.Simpson@wrfn.info.

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 group meets virtually on the second Tuesday of the month from 10-11:30am and the last Wednesday from 7-8:30pm. The meeting dates for this month are **May 11 and 28**.

If you're interested in participating, please contact Sue Simpson at 519-886-9150 ext. 1 or sue.simpson@wrfn.info.

WRFN's Family Resource Coach

During this current COVID-19 health crisis, personal support has become paramount for many families. Sue Furey, our Family Resource Coach, is 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. We encourage you to reach out. Call Sue at 519-886-9150 ext. 4 or email Sue.Furey@wrfn.info

More often than not, I use “exceptional”

By Cristina Stanger, Self-Advocacy Liaison, WRFN

Semantics can be a tricky thing. Language is constantly evolving in all facets of society. But words also carry a lot of weight, and I try to be very deliberate in how I choose them.

Exceptional. Special needs. Disability. Disorder. Difference. There are so many options used in the space surrounding the individuals and families we support; it can be intimidating, and sometimes confusing, as we strive to respect the rights, needs and values of others as we speak.

It is also important that the words we use communicate our intended meaning. I once saw an “Abilities Office,” and while I appreciate the effort to highlight the positive, it was not particularly clear to me who that office was meant to serve, and that can be problematic too. So I thought I would share my take on the terminology of the day; when do I use what term, and why.

My neurology will always be different from the average person. Physiologically speaking, I am the exception to the rule. Thus, I am exceptional. For a lot of my day-to-day life, I don't really think about this fact. It doesn't come up, it's not relevant, or I'm just busy being me and living life. This difference is there, underlying many aspects of my person and my experience, but it is not really an issue.

When I am in an environment or situation that conflicts with my exceptionality, then some accommodations are required. From my perspective, this is when I have a special need. I need accommodations to help me better operate in a world that wasn't really designed with me in mind. By meeting this special need, I am able to participate, to be included, to feel valued.

If my special need in a given situation is not or cannot be met, that can feel debilitating. I am disabled because I am *not able* to participate in the activity, event, or the environment. It is at these times that I feel like I have a disability. And it's okay to say that. Some people are afraid to use the word disability for fear of causing offense. Conversely, other people use the term disability very freely, not always considering the weight of the word. I fall somewhere in the middle. Perhaps, it's easier for me to use the word disability in reference to my own self, rather than using it in the context of someone else, so that may be a consideration too.

Generally speaking, I don't mind what words others use, as long as they are coming from a genuinely well-intentioned place. If there is a blatant misstep I try to politely educate on why a different choice of words might be preferred.

So in summary: I am always exceptional because I am “built” differently. I will have a special need when my exceptionality and environment are not inherently compatible. I feel disabled when this special need goes unmet, or simply cannot be accommodated.

It's impossible to find one word that will make everyone happy and that will be universally understood or adopted. And I sometimes wonder, what language will we be using 20 years from now? But for right here, and right now, I choose “exceptional” more often than not.

Steph's Corner

My Dream Team

In last month's WRFN Newsletter, I wrote an article about friends and family doing thoughtful things for me, that made me happy when I was sick. One group of friends, who were there for me, was my Dream Team.

You may be thinking "What is a Dream Team?"

- My Dream Team is a group of about 15 people of all ages that are my friends.
- They care about me and like to do things with me.
- When we first got together as a group, my Dream Team wrote down why they liked to be around me. We took those words and made T-shirts for everyone.
- We get together 3 or 4 times a year.
- My facilitator and I plan the meetings.
- The meetings are fun because we have food, we laugh, we sometimes do crafts and we talk about me.
- My Dream Team listens to my dreams and my goals.
- They support me in working toward my goals.
- My mom really likes that I have this circle of support because she knows that she is not on her own, helping me to have a good life.
- Throughout the year, I get together 1on 1 with my friends on the Dream Team. When there is no COVID, they invite me for sleepovers, to have a cooking day and to go out for breakfast. They help me with my photo notecards, they come and play games with me and they watch me bowl. We have lots of fun!
- When I was sick, the Dream Team made a beautiful book of photos and messages for me.
- They make me smile, keep me strong and cheer me on.



Let me tell you about how the Dream Team helped me with one of my goals. My mom and I thought that it would be good for me to experience living outside of our family home. My goal was to find a place near our house and to find a roommate because I didn't want to live by myself. My Dream Team jumped into action.

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Cont'd Steph's Corner

Here are some of the things they did to help me be more independent and to find a place where I would be happy.

- My facilitator and I planned a meeting for all my Dream Team to attend. I shared with them my goal.

They listened to me and asked me some questions ... What do you want the apartment to look like? Where do you want to live? What kind of person do you want your roommate to be?

- My facilitator wrote down what we talked about so we could figure out a plan. All my Dream Team offered to help in different ways.
- They helped me practise doing the things I would need to do when I was in an apartment, like teaching me how to use taxi scripts, doing laundry, using the microwave and cleaning the bathroom. Some of these chores were not my favourite things to do.
- When we found a place, they helped me move in, gave me furniture for the apartment, came and stayed overnight, took me out for groceries, made supper with me, texted me to make sure I was okay and took me out to do fun things.
- It took a long time and a lot of work for us to find the right place and for me to be comfortable moving out. They helped me take baby steps to reach my goal. I couldn't have done it without my Dream Team.

No matter what, my Dream Team is there to support me. They are my friends, who I have fun with, who help me dream and figure things out and who celebrate with me. They are the BEST!



Steph Prysnuik

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.

EVENTS

2021 Annual Public Meeting: Making Canada Accessible

This is the first annual public meeting. The event is free and will happen virtually on

May 31, 2021 at 1:00 pm.

It will be an opportunity to:

Meet the Board of Directors and CEO;

Learn about our role, our achievements, and our future plans;

Hear from accessibility experts; and

Share thoughts and ask questions on accessibility areas related to our mandate.

Register for this event at: <https://bit.ly/3xoDZzK>.

Virtual Symposium: Strategic Approaches To Perinatal Mental Health Care in Canada

The symposium will take place on May 5th, 2021, World Maternal Mental Health Day and is open to clinicians, researchers, advocates, government, and members of the general public.

Learn more about this event at: <https://bit.ly/3dPIHQI>.

PROGRAMS/RECREATION

LEG Up! Online — May 10 — June 18

LEG Up! provides online skill enhancement and learning experiences.

You will need a computer, tablet or phone with a webcam, audio and internet connection.

Monday, Music at 11am — Start the week off on a musical note.

Monday, Let's Learn at 1pm — Grab a pen and paper to jot some notes to record your learning!

Tuesday, Cooking: Favs! at 11am — Cook some delicious LEG UP! Favs.

Wednesday, Wellness at 1pm — Learn some techniques to keep you healthy and well.

Interactive Thursday at 11am — Add some fun to your week while interacting with your peers.

Thursday, Arts & Crafts at 2pm — Let's draw together.

Friday, Baking at 11am — Bake some yummy treats along with your LEG UP! Friends.

Learn more about these programs at <https://bit.ly/32O7cpT>.

For information about registration watch <https://youtu.be/3JLZYG3hxqA>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

LEG UP! Online Youth Edition

For youth ages 13-17

You will need a computer, tablet or phone with a webcam, audio and internet connection.

All classes take place on Tuesday from 4-5pm. Fee per class: \$15

Let's Do Laundry, May 11 — Learn some great strategies to keep your clothes clean.

Let's Clean, May 18 — Take a tour around your home and learn some simple cleaning tips.

Let's Shop, May 25 — Learn how to shop in an organized and economical manner to save time and money.

Let's Work Safely in the Kitchen, June 1 — Let's learn some safety skills in the kitchen.

Personal Safety at Home, June 8 — Let's learn some skills to stay safe at home.

Let's Meet the Neighbours, June 15 — Let's talk about how to meet people and be a good neighbour where you live.

Learn more about these programs at: <https://bit.ly/3vh8pCm>.

Adults in Motion

Programs — Adults in Motion offers a number of in-person programs and virtual activities throughout the day. Enjoy personal connections, making new friendships and participating in entertaining activities.

Summer Camp — Summer Camp Days are flexible and can be built around your summer schedule by choosing the specific days or weeks desired.

To learn more about Adults in Motion and what they are offering visit

<https://adultsinmotion.org/kitchener-waterloo/>.

Recreational Respite Virtual Services

Virtual services offer unique experiences in small group, 1:1 and 'Build It' workshop sessions that aim to provide independent skill mastery for children, youth and adults with disabilities. These person-centred programs and workshops will cultivate life skills, promote self-care, encourage engagement, inclusion and social connectivity.

Check out information about their virtual services at <https://bit.ly/2KHe2la>.

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

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Sunbeam Community & Development Services Summer Camps

[MFTD \(Medically Fragile Technologically Dependent\) for Children & Teens](#) — An exciting theme-based program for children and teens aged 4 to 18 years old that includes crafts, swimming, snoezelen room time, community outings, physical fitness, and games in the gym.

[Summer Fun Days](#) — For adults 18+. This program includes crafts, swimming, snoezelen room time, community outings, physical activities and games in the gym. All activities are geared toward having fun and promoting positive social interactions.

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://bit.ly/3906LfL>

BE-Connected Virtual Hangout

Bridges to Belonging is offering a place to virtually hangout, meet new people and talk about what's happening in your world.

Wednesday from 7:00-8:00pm | Use the following Zoom link to join: <https://bit.ly/3iHFwdm>.

Artshine Virtual Accessible Art For Kids, Teens & Adults

Social distancing need not rob you of the joy that comes from expanding your art skills! We've got live video lessons via Zoom for all ages, with art supplies mailed to you in advance! Maximum 20 participants for personalized attention.

Click [here](#) for more information!

Rainbow Day Camp

Memorable day camp activities for children and youth 4+.

Leaders in training program for youth 11-14.

Fully inclusive day camp with one-to-one support available.

Learn more at www.rainbowdaycamp.com.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Camp Kodiak

A unique, integrated, non-competitive summer program for children and teens with and without ADHD, LD and high functioning ASD.

Camp Kodiak nurtures campers' personal, athletic and social success to ensure they feel valued and celebrated. Find more information about their summer program [here](#).

Learn more about Camp Kodiak on their website at www.CampKodiak.com.

Our Place KW - Family Resource and Early Years Centre

Our Place continues to offer a variety of programming opportunities.

Stork Secrets—Pregnancy and postpartum adjustment peer support. Learn more about this free virtual program [here](#).

Head over to <https://www.ourplacekw.ca/programs> for a full list of programs and registration 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):

- FASD Educational Group
- 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

Steckle Heritage Farm Agriventure Summer Day Camp

Agriventure Day Camps (5 to 12 year olds) - Campers will be divided into groups based on their age and younger groups will have more support staff. Summer day camp includes outdoor education, a variety of activities, self-guided play time and more!

Leaders In Training Camps (LITs) - Leadership camp for children entering Grade 7 & 8. This program allows campers to develop their leadership skills and take on more responsibility while participating in all of our camp activities!

Junior Leaders Program - A great opportunity for students entering Grade 9 to earn volunteer hours, further develop their leadership skills and gain a reference for future job applications.

For more information visit <https://bit.ly/3boa9kX>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

EarlyON Waterloo Region

EarlyON provides a variety of developmentally appropriate, fun, and interactive learning opportunities for you and your child to explore together.

You can enjoy LIVE groups Monday-Saturday on their Facebook page [@EarlyONWR](#). No registration required.

You can also find a variety of programs that require registration.

Check their website [earlyyearsinfo.ca](#) for registered programs and new songs/activities every week.

Camp Kennebec

For children, teens, and young adults with special needs and developmental delays including Autism, Asperger's, ADHD, OCD, learning disabilities, anxiety and social skill challenges.

[Camp Kennebec Brochure](#) | [Why Camp Kennebec?](#)

<https://campkennebec.com/>

Shadow Lake Centre

Since 1965, Shadow Lake Centre has been offering a summer camp program for children, youth and adults with an intellectual disability.

The summer camp experience at Shadow Lake is self-directed, meaning guests can spend their time doing things they truly enjoy!

<https://www.shadowlakecentre.ca/>

[Shadow Lake Centre Camp Brochure](#) | [Shadow Lake News](#)

WORKSHOPS/TRAINING

Woolwich Community Health Centre Presents

Coping with Anxiety & Depression, May 5 — Anxiety and depression can affect our thinking, our emotions, our behaviours, and our physical health. Learn more at: <https://bit.ly/3vf9daK>.

The Mental Health of Teens, May 12 — Multiple factors, such as physical, emotional and social changes can make teens at risk for mental health issues and life challenges.

Learn more at: <https://bit.ly/3dP2yy9>.

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 skills and strategies to bond with your children. Learn about teaching your children important topics such as emotions, health and communication.

When: Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30pm Where: Zoom

Contact Sarah 226-339-5616 or capc@carizon.ca to register or for more information.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Upcoming webcasts from p4p Planning Network

Nurturing Supportive Relationships, May 4 — See how building nurturing and supportive relationships is an important step toward personal autonomy for your loved one.

Creative Options for Home, May 18 — Learn more about innovative housing options that could support you and your loved one in taking the next step toward “home.”

Introduction to the RDSP, June 17 — Learn about the RDSP, a made-in-Canada, long-term savings vehicle designed specifically for individuals who have a disability.

To learn more about these events or to register visit <https://bit.ly/3a1XTFN>.

Upcoming Offerings from Sunbeam Developmental Resource Centre

Motivation and Reinforcement, May 6 — Learn the differences between reinforcement and punishment, as well as learn what reinforcement is and how this impacts behaviour.

Prompting Procedures, May 13 — Discuss the importance of prompting as a way to teach your child a new skill.

Discussing Puberty and Sexuality with your Child, May 18 — You will be given resources and strategies to help you guide your child through this next step in their development and give them the knowledge and skills to keep them safe.

Managing Challenging Behaviour, May 20 — This will focus on: The 4 functions of behaviour; antecedent strategies; Replacement behaviours; Consequence strategies.

Cyber Bullying and Internet Safety, May 25 — Learn more about how to keep your child safe while using the internet.

Autism and Social Communication Skills, May 31 — An overview of practical strategies to support communication development for individuals with ASD and will cover social communication skills including theory of mind, hidden curriculum, read the room, comic strip conversations and using scripts to support social skills.

Apps for Communication and Learning, June 7 — Suggestions for iPad apps for cause/effect, literacy, social skills, visual supports, communication and language as well as suggestions for setting up an iPad and iPad settings.

Virtual Information Session on Financial Supports, June 10 — Learn more about the various financial supports, including eligibility criteria, which are available to families who have a child ages 0-18 diagnosed with Autism and/or Intellectual Disability.

To learn more about any of these events or to register visit: <https://bit.ly/3vbZZfe>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Affordable Housing and Why You Should Apply Webinar

Join DSO Housing Navigators for a free information session highlighting the different types of affordable housing programs available to individuals of low to moderate income.

May 13, 2021 – 10:00am – 11:30am EST (in French) Inscrivez-vous ici: <http://bit.ly/abordable13Mai>

May 25, 2021 – 6:30pm – 7:30pm EST (in English) Register Here: <http://bit.ly/AffordableMay25>

Workshops and Groups from Woolwich Counselling Centre

Stand Tall, Ages 7-9 — This group promotes confidence and assertiveness enabling children to protect and express themselves.

Upcoming Session: May 5, 12, 19, 26 & June 2 5-6PM

For more information on any of these groups go to woolwichcounselling.org or call 519-869-8651

Groups from Muslim Social Services

Ladies Virtual Tea Time — Have a relaxing time together via Zoom. Thursday, 4:30-5:30pm.

Positive Parenting — A weekly program for parents to learn how to deal with parenting challenges during COVID-19 related isolation, homeschooling and changed family routines.

Monday, 5:00-6:00pm.

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.

Seniors Zoom Group — Weekly program for seniors to stay connected and learn about community resources. Friday, 4:00-5:00pm.

To learn about any of these programs contact:

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

Safety for Independent Living

Passport Community Developers are hosting a number of virtual Safety for Independent Living sessions. This is a personal safety course where people learn lifeskills that empower them to make safe choices and caring and respectful decisions in their everyday lives both online and offline.

May 18-21 and May 25-28, 12:00-1:00pm

June 14, 10:00-12:00pm and June 15-18, 10:00-11:30am

September 21-24, 6:00-8:00pm

October 18-22, 1:00-3:00pm

November 8-12, 3:00-5:00pm

December 6-10, 10:00-12:00pm

Location: Virtually (Zoom) Cost: \$55 — Passport funding admissible

Contact Amanda Paradis, Waterloo Passport Community Developer to register aparadis@cwsds.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Oh! The Places You'll Go!!

Virtual Transition Planning Presentation for Waterloo Region

Intended for caregivers and/or students (aged 15-21). This presentation discusses the school transition plan, making the transition from school to adult life, how and when to connect to adult developmental services, Passport funding (community participation funding allocated to eligible individuals), Ontario Disability Support Program, and Service Coordination.

Watch the presentation at: https://youtu.be/arOW_HE9IZE.

Opportunities Through Lutherwood

Become an Indeed Super-Star — Indeed is a very well known job board used by employers and job seekers: attend this webinar to build your confidence on how to use the site and gain some tips to learn strategies to help you find suitable work! <https://bit.ly/3f56j3F>

Modern Approach to Interviewing — Struggling to prepare for interviews? Not sure how to give the right answer? Attend to learn how to prepare for interviews! <https://bit.ly/3vPPm31>

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County (LDAWC)

Upcoming Events & Workshops

Keith Gelhorn presents StrADDegies for Success – Acing the Transition to Post-Secondary as a Neurodivergent Student — Join Keith Gelhorn, ADDvocacy CEO and coach, as he presents his workshop on his ADHD story, why he started ADDvocacy.org and how to navigate the up to \$24,000 in Grants for Post-Secondary Students with Permanent Disabilities through Canada Student Loans. He will also discuss navigating accommodations both in and out of the classroom and will be available for any questions that parents and students may have.

Learn more about this event at: <https://bit.ly/32ZCmuF>

Building Capacity in Independent Facilitation OIFN Shared Learning Events

For people living with disabilities, family members and/or loved ones, and aspiring and experienced independent facilitators.

Courses will be held virtually using Zoom.

Deepening Mindful Practices—May 17 & 31

Fostering Conversations about What Matters—June 17 & 24

Space is limited. Register at <https://www.oifn.ca/events-calendar/>.

Upcoming Programs with Autism Ontario

Virtual Teen Music Program (ages 13-17) - Join credentialed music therapist for 8-weeks as she leads teens with ASD in active music making, movement and Therapeutic Playlist building. Begins May 3. Visit: <https://bit.ly/3gDGj06>.

Virtual Adult Music Program (ages 18+) - Join credentialed music therapist for 8-weeks as she leads teens with ASD in active music making, movement and Therapeutic Playlist building. Begins May 3. Visit: <https://bit.ly/3u3dBcV>

Information, Opportunities & Resources

RESOURCES

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

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

Summer Camp Information

The KidsAbility website shares important information about summer camps.

If you are looking for information for camps for your child, KidsAbility offers a number of camps and works with community-based camp programming. You can find information about planning, fee assistance and supports at: <https://www.kidsability.ca/camp-info>.

You can also find a Summer Camp Directory on the KidsAbility website or the WRFN Blog.

The information is provided to assist families with identifying camps that offer specialized programming for children and youth with disabilities, or inclusive camps that are welcoming to all abilities and may provide additional supports to those with special needs. You can find this information at: <https://www.kidsability.ca/camp-directory-summer> OR <https://bit.ly/3rdSKRO>.

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>.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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>.

Transition to Adulthood Clinic (for KidsAbility clients 15+) — Have you started to think about your life after high school? Do you have questions about services for adults with disabilities in the community? The Transition to Adulthood Clinic is an opportunity to meet with the Transitions Lead who will help to guide you in the right direction with planning for your future. Find information about the Transition to Adulthood Clinic at <https://kidsability.ca/transition-adulthood-clinic>.

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/>

SUPPORT GROUPS

Preemie Parents of Waterloo-Wellington

Preemie Parents of Waterloo-Wellington remains available online through a private Facebook group: <https://bit.ly/3iJL9rx>.

They look forward to returning to the Cambridge Family Early Years Centre and Our Place Family Resource and 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>

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.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

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!

Ontario-Wide Virtual Support Group for Black parents and caregivers

Support, isolation, funding, resources, friends....These are the things that many families who care for someone with special needs think and worry about. For many of these families, their circle of support is quite small. This is often the case for racialized communities who have a child with special needs. The Black Parents of Children and Adults with a Disability 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.

Location/Meetings: This is a volunteer run group that meets on the 2nd & 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. You can also find them on Facebook @ BPSG: Black Parents of Children and Adults with a Disability Support Group.

Chronic Pain Monthly Support Group

This group 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.

Parents for Children's Mental Health Virtual Peer Support Group

Family/Caregiver Support Group — The fourth Tuesday of each month from 7-8:30pm

ADHD Caregiver Support Group — The third Wednesday of each month from 7-9pm

Group information is available by emailing waterloo@pcmh.ca.

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County Virtual Peer Support Network

Are your kids staying engaged with online learning? Are you looking for ideas to keep them (and yourself) motivated?

Join the Peer Support Network and meet other parents on a similar journey to yours. LDAWC peer support network's goal is to provide an informal setting to share experiences, challenges, successes and resources.

This group takes place the second Monday of the month from 7:00-8:30pm

Learn more at <https://ldawc.ca/events.html>.

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

DSO Housing Navigation and Toolkit Survey

This survey will ask questions about DSO Housing Navigation services and the information and tools that Housing Navigators provide.

Your participation will help DSO understand what people are looking for from Housing Navigators, what is working well and what we can offer in the future.

Survey responses will be collected until May 14, 2021.

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

Family Alliance Ontario Survey

Family Alliance Ontario is asking for your participation in a survey intended to learn more about how students with disabilities are being serviced by public school boards at this time. This survey will give

Integration Action for Inclusion an idea of whether COVID-19 is changing what placement options families would normally opt for as well as whether your placement options have been influenced by resource allocations or other decisions that school boards make.

To participate in the survey, go to <https://bit.ly/3qRc9rl>.

Waterloo Region Youth Impact Survey

Youth in Waterloo Region between the ages 9 and 18 have the opportunity to participate in the [Youth Impact Survey](#). The Youth Impact Survey was developed in partnership WITH young people in Waterloo Region and asks well-being questions on a variety of topics.

This 20 minute survey is totally voluntary and anonymous. Youth who fill it out will receive volunteer hours and a chance to win prizes and the data collected will help inform future experiences for children and youth in Waterloo Region. To learn more about the survey, please click [here](#).

Information, Opportunities & Resources

Critical/Important Information from Family Alliance Ontario

For the past year, disability advocates have been raising the alarm over the provincial governments proposed critical care triage protocol. As we are experiencing the third wave of the pandemic, seeing increased numbers of patients in Intensive Care Units, and are faced with the real threat of our health care system collapsing, we have collected information from trusted resources for your awareness and information on this important issue. Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/3tUrbiG>.

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](#)

Survey: 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>.

Research Opportunity: Caregivers and Challenges with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The purpose of this study is to understand the challenges faced by people providing the frontline care for children with these special educational needs (SENs). This includes parents, educators, occupational, speech and language therapists, social workers, doctors, and behavioral clinicians. The research seeks to find the common pinch points faced by these frontline caregivers especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Find more information about this study [here](#) or contact May Alonge at malonge@uwaterloo.ca.

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