

# Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table

Update – Issue #12



February 2018

## Family Compass Waterloo Region Launches!

When we set out the journey of transformation to the system of special needs supports, we learned quickly from parents that knowing where to start can be tough. We are very fortunate in our community to have the programs and services that we do...however, with so many doors, it was sometimes a challenge for parents to know where to look for help. Many parents had the frustrating experience of making multiple calls, and some were not even sure where to start – and so they didn't. The heartbreaking results included children who missed critical windows for intervention, those who arrived at school with undiagnosed needs, and in general, children, youth and families suffering without answers and support.

We realized quickly that a new model had to include an easier way for families and youth to get started on their journey towards supports.

In partnership with the Children and Youth Planning Table, and the Moving on Mental Health Initiative, the Special Needs Strategy Planning Table is pleased to bring you



## Family Compass Waterloo Region

Guiding you to services for children and youth

[FamilyCompassWR.ca](http://FamilyCompassWR.ca) – a new go-to site for all services for children and youth in Waterloo Region that features an easy-to-use online tool to direct parents and youth to their best starting point based on their concerns. The online tool's survey is confidential and users can save their customized results for later, or submit them to the appropriate starting point organization immediately. Once submitted, the starting point organization will then follow up to discuss the concerns identified, put wheels in motion to move to assessment (if desired/ warranted) and/or warm transfer to other organizations that may be beneficial (if desired/ warranted).

[FamilyCompassWR.ca](http://FamilyCompassWR.ca) launches on February 12<sup>th</sup> – be sure to check it out and help us spread the word!

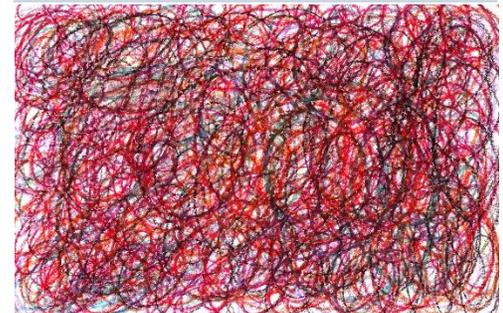
*"It is a great resource! A one stop shop, quick hit where the resources a parent needs to navigate the system are simple"*

- Parent, pilot participant

## Special Needs Strategy

### Vision:

A Waterloo Region where children and youth with special needs get the timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, at school, in the community, and as they prepare to achieve their goals for adulthood.



## Looking for More Information?

For the most up-to-date information, you can also visit our dedicated webpage at <http://waterlooregionsspecialneedsstrategy.weebly.com/> or the Provincial webpage at <http://specialneedsstrategy.children.gov.on.ca>

## Changes to Special Needs Supports to Date

In 2014 the Province of Ontario announced the Special Needs Strategy. The goal of this Strategy is to connect children and youth to the services they need as early as possible, and improve the service experience for families.

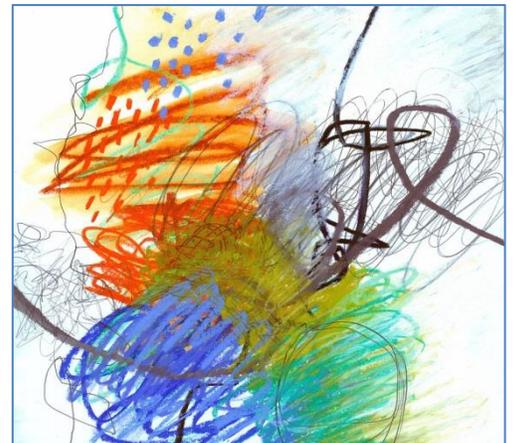
In Waterloo Region, service providers and families alike embraced that goal and began the work of moving toward an integrated and seamless service system.

In addition to the development and launch of Family Compass right around the corner, other important changes have occurred as a result of our work together. In general, collaboration and partnership between organizations is higher. We have learned about ourselves and others as we have worked towards together towards system improvements for the children, youth and families that we serve.

All along we have benefitted from the guidance of Waterloo Region Family Network (WRFN) and the experiences of families. As a result of this input, many system changes have already occurred:

- Agencies have altered the hours of work to reflect a family's need for appointment times that work for them.
- KidsAbility has significantly altered its intake processes to provide more support to families earlier. Intake Social Workers and Resource Centres in all locations provide services while families are waiting for assessment. A new model of service delivery for infants, toddlers and preschoolers is emerging. It includes coaching therapy, groups and parent education. Alternative models are offered to families who need help to attend appointments.
- A new approach to service accessibility has led to the creation of community hubs in some parts of our Region and agencies are working closely to share access and resources so that services are as convenient as possible for families.
- Agencies are working in partnership to share knowledge and expertise. For example, training and service in Occupational Therapy is being offered in partnership with Carizon and KidsAbility.
- For youth attending school, rehabilitation services can now be available until age 21 (from 18).
- For students enrolled in parochial school, therapy services are now available.

While much has been accomplished, much work continues to be needed. The partners in Waterloo Region are excited to continue work to improve the service experience for children, youth and families from birth to school exit. Thank you always to the children, youth and families who are always at the forefront of the work we do!



## Coordinated Service Planning Update

In March 2017, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services officially approved the service delivery model proposed by the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table. With a scheduled launch date of January 2018, we have continued to work closely with our community partners to clarify roles and responsibilities, select and implement the technology necessary to share information across organizations and “test” the processes developed with family representatives to ensure we meet our objectives of delivering a coordinated, seamless, family-centred service. Key outcomes over the last six months include:

- Development of a family-centred website, aimed at directing youth and families to the resources needed to provide support (see Family Compass content on page 1);
- Selection and implementation of an electronic system to collect and share information across multiple service providers, allowing for integrated, seamless service and reducing the need for families to re-tell their story;
- Selection and development of training to ensure all organizations delivering coordinated service planning are resourced to meet family needs;
- Communication materials developed to increase awareness of coordinated service planning in Waterloo Region.

We know that true impact is only measured when families experience coordinated service planning and report an improved experience with the service system. We are excited to be launching this work in 2018!

## Integrated Rehabilitation Services Update

Effective April 1, 2018 responsibility for speech, occupational therapy and physiotherapy in schools will shift from the LHIN (formerly CCAC) to KidsAbility. This is the beginning of a new model of the integrated delivery of rehabilitation services for school aged children and youth. In the short term, families should not experience any change in service. The therapists that they are currently working with children remain in place. KidsAbility will enter into a contractual arrangement with St. Elizabeth to continue the services uninterrupted. Waterloo Region District School Board, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir and Conseil scolaire Viamonde will continue to provide language services. Over the course of the next year, KidsAbility, the school boards and service providers will continue to explore ways to heighten the service experience for families.

### Planning Table Members

- Carizon/Lutherwood
- Children and Youth Planning Table
- Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
- Conseil scolaire Viamonde
- Erinoakkids
- Family and Children's Services
- First Nation, Metis and Inuit of Waterloo Region
- Kerry's Place
- KidsAbility Centre for Child Development
- KidsAbility School Authority
- KW Habilitation
- Region of Waterloo
- Sunbeam
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Waterloo Region District School Board
- Waterloo Region Family Network
- Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)

For more information on the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy please contact one of our Chairs or visit <http://waterlooregionspecialneedsstrategy.weebly.com/>. This document is available in alternative formats upon request and questions in French can be answered via our Chairs.

#### Coordinated Service Planning

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#### Rehabilitation Services

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