

Newly Diagnosed?

You are not alone!

Information about services and help available in Fort McMurray
from the Autism Society of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Local Services and Support

Autism Society Of The RMWB



Autism Society of the RMWB - Here to help ALL disabilities

Offers programming for children and adults and has the capacity to assist families and individuals navigate additional services, as well as support them through their journey. By providing a variety of educational presentations as well as engaging in community events, we continue to strive to create an inclusive community.

Programs:

Support Program, Camp Kids First, Social Respite Program, Education Resources, Adult "Chat-n-Chill" Program, Community Sensory Room, Life skills, Employment Support

Education and Information:

Workshops and seminars, provide support for inclusive programming, Education Inclusion Program

Contact:

Suite 21B (Lower level of Unifor 707a building) 10019 MacDonald Ave. Fort McMurray, AB, T9H 1S9

Office Phone:

587-452-9334

Email:

autismsupport@autismrmwb.org

Website:

autismrmwb.org

FSCD

Family Services for Children with Disabilities

FSCD is a government program available to all families living in Alberta who have a child with a disability and meet specific criteria. Eligibility is not based on income or your child having a specific diagnosis. FSCD helps with disability related costs that are above and beyond the costs associated with raising a child.

Phone:

780-645-6417

Email:

css.ds-north@gov.ab.ca

Website:

alberta.ca/fscd.aspx



FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

(HERE TO HELP ALL DISABILITIES)

Barbara Fitzpatrick

Family Resource Coordinator

Autism Alberta's Family Resource Centres

Fort McMurray/RMWB

autismalberta.ca/family-resource-centres

barbaraf@autismalberta.ca

780-215-2459

If you any have questions, need help navigating FSCD, need help finding resources, or just need support. Please reach out! I am here to help in any way I can.

You are not alone!

Support 4 Moms



A valuable resource in the community for families of children with special needs to build connections with people in the local community with shared experiences.

Provide a safe venue for parents to build networks, share experiences in a positive non-judgmental manner, and to learn from and support peers in navigating the world of special needs, differences, and medical abnormalities.

Provide low-cost or cost-free inclusive activities and monthly coffee sessions throughout the year to promote sharing experiences and education on various community programs. Also, to provide financial support for local sports programs and teams.

Contact:

Email: support4moms@outlook.com

Facebook page:

Support 4 moms Society- Fort McMurray

Website:

support4moms.com

Birchwood Circle of Care



We service children and adults and work as a team to service children with complex needs (Autism, Global Developmental Delay, Down Syndrome, etc.).

Services:

Speech Language Pathology

Occupational Therapy

Physiotherapy

Psychology

Diagnostic Clinic: Autism, ADHD, etc.

Contact:

8106 Fraser Ave Unit 41, Fort McMurray AB, T9H 1W6

Email:

birchwoodcoc@gmail.com

Phone:

780-607-8376

Website:

birchwoodcoc.com

Educare Early Intervention Preschool



Special needs programming is available to children 2.8 years old – 5 years old. We are a multi-faceted organization that has a variety of programs in place to serve children and their families to enhance supports and build strong educational foundations.

Program includes:

Speech and Language Program, Social Skills Program, Pre-Printing Skills, Family Literacy Program, Family Resource Program, Sensory Integration Program, Gross Motor Skills Development Program

Contact:

9803 King Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 1L3
(Entrance & Parking Lot at rear of FMCHS)

Email:

EducareEarlyIntervention@shaw.ca

Phone:

780-743-3464

Website:

educareearlyintervention.com

The Hub Family Resource Centre



We believe that families are entitled to the services that best meet their needs and that a child's development is dependent upon the strength of the parent/child relationship. We also understand that your family's needs can change, which is why our programming supports different stages of early child development and our services can support you through various parenting challenges. Our programs and services are free and delivered by professional family support workers who are excited to meet you and your family! Offers Triple P Parenting Program.

Contact:

1 C. A. Knight Way, Fort McMurray AB, T9H 5C5

Phone:

780-743-9225

Website:

thehubfrc.ca

Early Childhood Intervention Program

Offers navigation, education and support for families in many different settings including home-based (if needed) to children with developmental delays and/or disabilities.

The program provides navigation, education, support and information for families of children from birth to 5 years in many settings and locations; clinic, family's home (if needed), playgroups, and in the community. Works with families concerned with their child's development and/or children at risk for developmental delays (premature birth, prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol, diagnosed disability).

Contact:
113 Thickwood Boulevard
Phone:
780-714-5616
Website:
bit.ly/AHSEarlyIntervention

Wood Buffalo Regional Library

We continuously offer new programming and technologies to help you stay curious and stay informed. We'll help you explore, discover, enjoy, embrace it all – online or in real life. WBRL is the place to experience it all!

Contact:
MacDonald Island
Phone:
780-743-7800
Website:
wbrl.ca

Fort McMurray Public Schools

Fort McMurray Public Schools provides inclusive programming and offers a wide range of supports for students with diverse learning needs. To honour the unique and changing needs of our students, we recognize the importance of ensuring supports are available to provide the most equitable learning environment. Fort McMurray Public School District supports children, youth and families using a variety of models.

Children may enter school as young as 2.9 years old.

Contact:
231 Hardin Street Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 2G2
Phone:
780-799-7900
Email:
info@fmprsd.ab.ca
Website:
fmprsd.schools.ca

Fort McMurray Catholic Schools

Fort McMurray Catholic Schools values persons. Our first placement is inclusive, having children placed with their peers in their neighborhood school. Working with the school team and parents, the appropriate level of approaches and supports are developed for each child that may include regular classroom placement, regular classroom placement with supports, partial classroom placement with pull out programming or a specialized division program.

Children may enter School as young as 2.9 years old.

Contact:
9809 Main Street, Fort McMurray, AB, T9H 1T7
Phone:
780-799-5700
Email:
info@fmcsd.ab.ca
Website:
fmcschools.ca

Mental Health

Some Other Solutions



Some Other Solutions (SOS) is a Society for Crisis Prevention. We are a proactive community, here to empower you to be your best self. To be confident through chaos and to help you find the strength within to not only be empowered yourself, but to spread that feeling to others at the same time. Some Other Solutions is a trusted resource for mental wellness in Northern Alberta with professional counselling services, mentorship programs and a 24/7 crisis line to ensure everyone in the community is supported in the moment they need it most.

Contact:

202A-8706 Franklin Ave, Fort McMurray AB T9H 2J6

Phone:

780-743-8605

Website:

someothersolutions.ca

Walk In Counselling Services



Provides counselling on a walk-in basis for people experiencing a range of emotional or mental health issues. Gives short-term counselling service to help people make changes in their lives. Sometimes people feel overwhelmed, aren't sure what to do, and need more than a friend to talk to.

Confidential counselling sessions are 50 minutes.

Contact:

Wood Buffalo Addiction and Mental Health Services
339 Powder Drive Fort McMurray, Alberta T9K 0M4

Phone:

780-793-8360

Website:

bit.ly/RMWBWalkInCounselling

Caregiver Connections



Peer to Peer Family Support

Many parents and caregivers may be concerned about their child's well-being or may have a difficult time coping with a mental health concern of a child or young adult. Families impacted by a mental health concern or diagnosis can find it particularly difficult to get the help they need.

With the support of trained peers with lived experience, parents and caregivers will learn how to best take care of themselves, ask for help when necessary and learn about the importance of boundaries. It is a safe place to gather together for shared stories, education, resources and support.

Phone:

780-743-1053

Email:

adminassistant@woodbuffalo.cmha.ab.ca

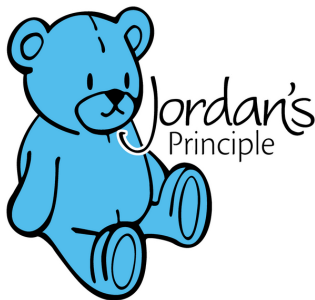
Website:

woodbuffalo.cmha.ca/programs-services/caregiver-connection/

*Your child is still
the same lovable,
wonderful person
they were before the
diagnosis!*

Indigenous Supports

Indigenous families are eligible for funding for needs that FSCD may not cover.



Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle makes sure all First Nations children living in Canada can access the products, services and supports they need, when they need them. Funding can help with a wide range of health, social and educational needs, including the unique needs that First Nations Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA children and youth and those with disabilities may have.

Phone:

1-855-572-4453 (1-855-JP-CHILD)

Website:

bit.ly/jordansprinciple

First Nations Health Consortium

Works to help Indigenous families from all Alberta treaty areas access Jordan's Principle funding. They help reduce the stress of the process, provide awareness of funding availability, work with other service providers, advocate, support families in telling their story in pursuit of achieving substantive equality, help with appeals, and support community driven group applications.

Phone:

1-844-558-8749

Email:

nochild4gotten@abfnhc.com

Website:

www.abfnhc.com



Taxes and Finances

Now that you have a diagnosis, you may qualify for the following:

Disability Tax Credit

The disability tax credit (DTC) is a non-refundable tax credit that helps persons with disabilities or their supporting persons reduce the amount of income tax they may have to pay. An individual may claim the disability amount once they are eligible for the DTC. This amount includes a supplement for persons under 18 years of age at the end of the year. Requires medical practitioner to fill out for T2201, Disability Tax Credit Certificate.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/segments/tax-credits-deductions-persons-disabilities/disability-tax-credit.html>

Child Disability Benefit

The child disability benefit (CDB) is a tax-free monthly payment made to families who care for a child under age 18 with a severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions. Must be eligible for the Canada Child Benefit and Disability Tax Credit (If you are eligible for these, you get this automatically. You do not have to apply)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/child-disability-benefit.html>

Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)

A registered disability savings plan (RDSP) is a savings plan intended to help parents and others save for the long-term financial security of a person who is eligible for the disability tax credit (DTC).

Contributions to an RDSP are not tax deductible and can be made until the end of the year in which the beneficiary turns 59. Contributions that are withdrawn are not included as income to the beneficiary when they are paid out of an RDSP. However, the Canada disability savings grant (grant), the Canada disability savings bond (bond), investment income earned in the plan, and the proceeds from rollovers are included in the beneficiary's income for tax purposes when they are paid out of the RDSP.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/registered-disability-savings-plan-rdsp.html>

InnoviCares Card

This free card may cover some extra costs for some brand name medications

<https://innovicares.ca/en>

Helpful Websites/Resources

Facebook Support Groups

facebook.com/groups/autismRMWB

- Autism Society of the RMWB

www.facebook.com/groups/225250874293589

- Support 4 Moms Society

CanLearn Society

canlearnsociety.ca

- Literacy, learning disabilities, ADHD & Mental Health

ADDitude

additudemag.com

- ADHD and other neurodiversity

Anxiety Canada

anxietycanada.com

Amazing Things Happen (video on ASD)

bit.ly/3Jobua4

Sibling Supports

autismalberta.ca/toolkit/about-autism-a-sibling-toolkit

Autism and/or Intellectual Disability Knowledge Exchange Network

aidecanada.ca

Autism Society Alberta

autismalberta.ca

Support 4 Moms Society

support4moms.com

- This website has lots of great links for different disabilities (scroll to the bottom)

Books

- Just Ask by Sonia Sotomayor
- Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew by Ellen Notbohm

Tips & Tricks

We talked to other parents. Here are some things they wish they had known when they began their special needs journey:

Organize

Special needs kids come with lots of paperwork. Assessments, test results, doctors, paperwork, paperwork... did we mention paperwork? There is no one way to stay organized, but you will be glad to have everything in one place the next time you need to fill out the parent portion of another assessment or are meeting a new doctor. Here are some suggestions:

- **Binder**
 - Get a large binder with pocket dividers. You can organize by specialists, dates or whatever works for your situation.
 - Keep everything that is related to your child in that binder so that you can refer back to things when needed. Details are fused into your mind while they are happening, but as time passes, we often forget details like dates and long technical names.
 - Many parents take that binder wherever they go, especially to a new doctor or to the emergency room. It's a great resource.
- **Box**
 - Let's be honest, after an appointment, sometimes all we can do is collapse on the couch when we get home. Sometimes it's all we can do to move from moment to moment. In this case, get a box (or a drawer) that is large enough for papers and just put everything in there when you receive it. It may take longer to find later, but at least you will know where it is.
- **Go digital**
 - Many places are going digital and it is easier to receive assessments by email. If you don't want to print everything out, keep a folder on your desktop for easy retrieval. This also makes it easier to pass on info to places like FSCD or the school if they want that information.
 - You can also use an online service like Dropbox or Google Docs to store information, that way you can access it anywhere with your phone.

Use your smart phone

- Keep the most important information about your child on your phone. Create a document or note on your phone with some of the following. Your child's Alberta Health Number, the medications they are on (including doses), their doctor(s) contact information (including their fax number) and any other information that may be important to their diagnosis or that you have trouble remembering. You will be surprised how often you need this information.
- If you don't have a smart phone or don't want to keep that information in there, write this information down and keep it in your wallet.

Self-Care

Self-Care Tips for Parents of Special Needs Children

by Alicia Munoz

Excerpts from: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/self-care-tips-for-parents-of-special-needs-children-0810175>

Being the parent of a child with a disability carries with it unique responsibilities, stressors, and rewards. It requires an extra dose of emotional resilience, perseverance, and resourcefulness.

As parents of children with disabilities proactively seek information and support and advocate for their children, they may discover frustrating limitations that reinforce a sense of isolation or exclusion and stoke emotions such as grief or anger. As a result of these and other factors, parents seeking support for their special needs children have special needs of their own when it comes to self-care.

Here are some key ways parents of children with disabilities can make self-care a priority:

1. GET SUPPORT

Community support:

Find others in your community with whom you feel accepted, celebrated, upheld, and safe. This could mean taking a class that interests you, strengthening your commitment to your faith community, or joining a book club.

Professional support:

Find an individual therapist or coach who can help you work through specific challenges and issues; soothe, manage, and reduce your fears and anxieties; and provide a space for you to grieve, rejoice, or process anger. If you struggle with speaking up for yourself or your child, you may want to focus some of your energies on learning how to be a more vocal and effective advocate.

Peer mentoring/group support:

Look for support groups, in person or online, where you can interface with others who are struggling with similar issues, or whose children are also facing challenges. This can serve multiple functions: it can help you feel supported and connected, it can provide relief as you share your difficulties with others who understand and relate to what you're going through, and it can help you access important information and resources related to ways others have dealt with and approached similar situations.

Self-Care

2. FIND TIME TO DO THE THINGS YOU LOVE

As the parent of a child with a disability, you likely expend tremendous energy trying to make sure your child has the privileges and opportunities available to other children. When your child's disability is long-term or involves being vigilant about basic safety needs, the strain can take a toll on your well-being unless you are disciplined about your self-care.

Finding ways to recharge, relax, and experience pleasure in your life is essential. The more balanced, relaxed, and recharged you are, the more patient, caring, and proactive you can be as your child's protector, nurturer, and advocate. Start with making a list of "Fun Things I Would Do If I Had Time." You might include activities like going for a bike ride, going to dinner with a friend or partner, painting or journaling, watching a movie, getting a massage, taking a walk outdoors, or going to the gym.

3. SEEK OUT AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RESPITE CARE SERVICES

Some parents of children with disabilities avoid taking advantage of respite care services for their children or feel pressured to "do it all on their own." They may be anxious about their children not receiving proper or attuned care, or they may feel guilty about needing a break. In fact, allowing yourself and your child to be supported by trained caregivers can offer both of you a positive "time out" from each other, allowing you to hit the figurative reset button. It can help you replenish your emotional resources so you can be stronger and more resilient in your parenting. Contact your FSCD worker to inquire about respite supports.

4. MEDITATE

Meditation can help you slow down, be in the present moment, and let go of trying to fix or control external circumstances, even if only for 5 to 10 minutes a day. There are multiple phone apps available with free or low-fee audio recordings of brief, guided meditations you can do between tasks, while you're waiting in line at the store, or when you're taking a bathroom break. These apps have reminders that encourage you to take a few moments out of your day and check in with yourself.

Everyone needs practice letting go of endlessly regenerating thoughts, beliefs, fear-based stories, and regrets in the interest of simply accepting life as it is right now. Parents of children with disabilities face added pressures and need to acknowledge their limitations and find ways to slow down, let go, and relax control, giving their nervous systems a much-needed rest.

*"Far from being a self-indulgent luxury,
your self-care is a critical necessity."*

Alicia Munoz