

Brainbridge

The Newsletter

Winter/Spring, 2021

Happy Spring, Readers!

We have a lot of exciting updates about what is going on with the CBIPCY in 2021 that we are happy to share with you all! Keep reading to find out more!

We also want to acknowledge that this year continues to have its unique challenges with the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic and we want you to know that our team is still here to support you over the phone and virtually. Contact your social worker to learn more.



***Inside the
Issue***

- **Program and Staff updates**
- **Online safety tips**
- **RCY Report Review:**
Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic

Program Staff Updates

Farewell to our Program Director, Valerie Upton

Val Upton has decided to retire after 30 years working with the BC Centre for Ability. Val worked in the Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth for many years, being part of the program's creation and development back in 1997 and becoming the program director 10 years ago. She left her position on January 29, 2021. We will miss Val in the program and wish her all the best in her new Adventure!



Welcome to the New Program Leader, Emma Gauvin

We are very happy to share that starting January 18th, the BCCFA Social Work Department will have a new leader, Emma Gauvin. Emma is coming to the Centre from Vancouver Coastal Health where she has worked in various leadership roles for 12 years. We are pleased to welcome Emma as the new leader of the Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth/Social Work Department at the BC Centre for Ability!



Welcome to the new Mental Wellness Coordinator, Margot Merinsky

Another new exciting beginning is the introduction of a Mental Wellness Coordinator to the CBIPCY! We are very excited to introduce Margot who will be providing mental wellness support to our families. Margot has been supporting the program behind the scenes, updating our High School Transition Guide (see page 5 for more details). We will provide more information on her role as we develop our new mental wellness focus. We are excited to have Margot be part of our team!



Online Safety Tips

Notable Online Elements:

- Apps
- Social media/networking
- Chat, messaging
- Live streaming
- Video sharing sites
- Online gaming

Behaviour to be Aware of:

- Cyberbullying
- Self/peer exploitation (Sexting)
- Online luring
- Exposure to elicited material
- Unauthorized credit card use

What Parents Can do:

- Learn about what features are included on devices
- Discuss how to be safe online
- Learn how to block calls/messages
- Ensure your child knows when to talk to a safe adult

Resources:

Protectkidsonline.ca
Needhelpnow.ca
Canadian Centre for Child Protection

It's important to have open conversations about what your child is engaging in online, including:

- The privacy controls they have set up on the apps they use.
- Who they are “friends” with on social media and how they know them.
- Who they chat with and/or video chat with online.
- What information they should and should not be revealing in their messages, posts and photos/videos.
- The fact the Internet is a public space and it's easy to lose control over what they post/message.
- Being a leader and not forwarding pictures of others they may receive.

Monitoring:

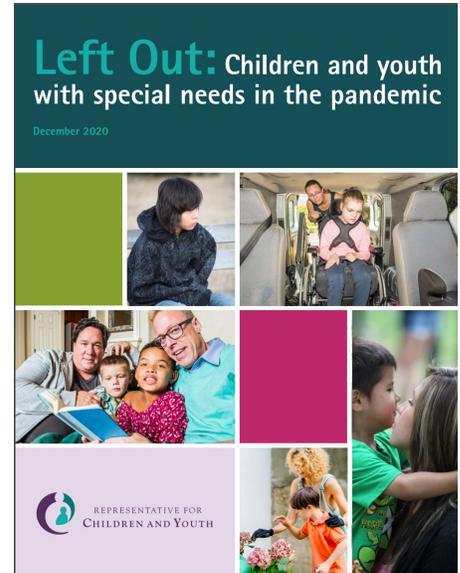
- Early on, set the expectation that you will monitor your child's use of their phone and follow through.
- Explore the possibility of blocking access to sites by using the settings on the device and/or parental control apps or by contacting the service provider.
- Set a time every evening at which all technology, including phones, are shut off in the house, some families choose to turn off access to wifi at this time.
- Establish guidelines around texting and gaming (who they are connecting with).
- Support your child by modelling these expectations yourself.

Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic

In December 2020, BC's *Representative for Children and Youth*, Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, released a report addressing the impact of the pandemic on children and youth with special needs.

The report states, "the tens of thousands of B.C. families who rely on supports and services for children and youth with special needs, the pandemic illuminated a crisis decades in the making." The purpose of the report is to explore what is going on for families, where there are issues and create a new framework to support families not only during the pandemic, but ongoing.

The report outlines the following next steps:



Eight immediate actions identified in the report to support the families of children and youth with extra needs:

- ⇒ Rapidly develop and roll out a family-engaged, plain-language communication strategy.
- ⇒ Extend for one year (Fall 2021) all pandemic-related benefits and processes for CYSN families.
- ⇒ Create a 'roundtable', bringing together families, community organizations, advocates and funding ministries for regular check-ins and problem-solving.
- ⇒ Include CYSN families as essential workers as a way to allow them to access important services during pandemic lockdowns.
- ⇒ Fund community organizations that serve CYSN families to develop activity plans for children.
- ⇒ Review virtual services during the first months of the pandemic to find better ways to serve families as the pandemic continues.
- ⇒ Streamline processes for emergency benefits and approvals that reduce paperwork and administrative burdens for families and continue to function during the disruption caused by the pandemic.
- ⇒ Look at the concept of support "bubbles" for in-home services (such as Nursing Support Services and respite) to limit the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for both families and service providers.

See the full report: https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CYSN_Report.pdf

Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth

New resources

For Youth, By Youth Booklet

The program developed a new resource for current and previous clients that is designed specifically for youth. The For Youth, By Youth booklet is a compilation of tips, advice, thoughts, experiences from youth and previous youth of the program who wanted to share their insights with individuals who are going through various stages of brain injury recovery. The purpose of the booklet was to provide information, education and advice to new participants entering the Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth returning home and starting their journey of recovery, as well as others who may benefit. We are excited to have the opportunity to share the perspectives of youth who have lived experiences, that may help others in similar situations.



High School Transition Guide

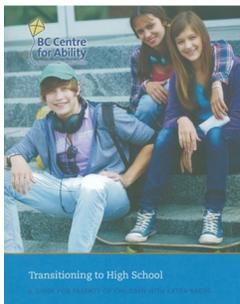
We recently updated our BCCFA workbook titled: 'Transitioning to High School: A Guide for Parents of Children with Diverse Abilities'.

This guide is meant to help prepare parents/caregivers and their child for their transition to high school so they feel confident and equipped throughout the process.

The guide is broken down into three sections:

1. Preparing Yourself
2. School Process
3. Mental Wellness

and finishes with recommended resources to access. If you are interested in seeing the pdf of this workbook please reach out to the CBIPCY team.



2016 Version



2021 Version

Inspire Me... Conversation with Mursal

The CBIPCY coordinators met with Mursal, a previous client of the program who is now 27 years old. At this time of her life, Mursal is working as a Youth Transition Coordinator. She has completed a diploma program and plans to continue her education in the near future at a University program. She also sits on the advisory council for the THRIVE program at the BCCFA. Mursal initially participated in the Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth when she was 15 years old following pulmonary tuberculosis, which led to a brain lesion and seizures.



Mursal discussed that going through her brain injury recovery as a teenager was difficult, as she really felt like she was 'missing out' from what other teenagers got to do. She also found that during that time of her life, she was managing a lot of things in her life, culturally, medically and mentally and working to find her identity. It has now been over 10 years since her injury and since then, Mursal has developed an inspirational insight into her experiences and we thought it would be helpful to share some of these insights.

"It can be a wacky journey but with the proper help and support, you're set up for success."

"When you fall, sit down, analyze, learn from it and then think about what you'll do differently. We have a picture of what we want, but life happens. And if you embrace that part of life too, it's easier to recover."

"The help I received shaped who I am and created my identity. It makes a huge difference having services in place while you're recovering."

"Take a pause. Give yourself time. If you do, it will help you with your success."

"Failing is okay – it helps you figure out what's right for you. One step at a time, you might want to run but taking things slowly is okay."

"Sometimes you can feel peer pressure because others have completed things earlier or differently, but now I realize that I'm happy with where I am. Even though it looks different than my friends."

"I felt embarrassed to have a support worker at school at first, but in the end I was really glad to have the support. This was a major help for passing my courses and advocating for post secondary."

"Every learning, every fall is a success. If you're happy with what you have, that's also success. Be happy with your balance as a person."

"I'm glad I was encouraged to give counselling a try. I learned about positive coping skills that I use ongoing. I always felt really privileged to have received this as a teen."

Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth

Upcoming Events

Groups

We are now offering groups both for youth and parents. Sessions occur monthly and are offered on a case by case basis to those that are interested. Please reach out to Whitney (Whitney.MacRae@bc-cfa.org) or Dana (Dana.Seidel@bc-cfa.org) if you are interested! We would love to meet with you and provide a space to connect!

Resources

Online Safety resources:

Protectkidsonline.ca

Needhelpnow.ca

Canadian Centre for Child Protection

(protectchildren.ca)

RCY Report

https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CYSN_Report.pdf

Contact Us

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We want to hear from you! Your Opinion Matters and Counts. Please participate in our parent survey. We would like to encourage you to write to us with your inspiring stories and lived experiences.