

The Psychosocial Team at BCCFA encompasses three programs: Key Worker Support Services (Burnaby), Family Counselling Support Services (Burnaby and New Westminster) and the Stepping Stones Program (Burnaby, Richmond, Vancouver, North Shore)

Happy New Year Psychosocial Program Families!

We hope you had a restful holiday and returning to school this month has gone smoothly.

We have a lot of exciting updates about what is going on with our Psychosocial Team in 2021 that we are happy to share with you all! We have some staff and funding updates and resources to share. 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.

We hope you enjoy looking through our newsletter and catching up with what is going on!

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

Stepping Stones Funding

As the 'Left Out' report on the previous page points out, children and youth with special needs and their families are being disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Services for children and youth with diverse abilities are critical, now more than ever, including the Psychosocial Programs at the BC Centre for Ability.

With generous funding from Vancouver Foundation's Community Response Fund and the United Way's Covid-19 Emergency Community Support Fund, the Stepping Stones Program has been able to expand services beyond age 12 and provide services to youth up to age 19. In addition, the new funding has enabled Stepping Stones to have a greater focus on the mental health needs of children and youth with diverse abilities and their families.



If you are following the BC Centre for Ability on social media you may have already seen this update there! For more Centre updates follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram by clicking the links below.

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

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 elicit 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](https://protectkidsonline.ca)
[Needhelpnow.ca](https://needhelpnow.ca)
[Canadian Centre for
Child Protection](https://www.cccp.ca/)

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.

High School Transition

Every year, we host a high school transition workshop for parents of children with diverse abilities who are transitioning to high school in the coming years. This year's workshop took place over Zoom on January 19th. We had great attendance and were fortunate to have representatives from both the Vancouver School Board and the Burnaby School District provide information to parents and caregivers.

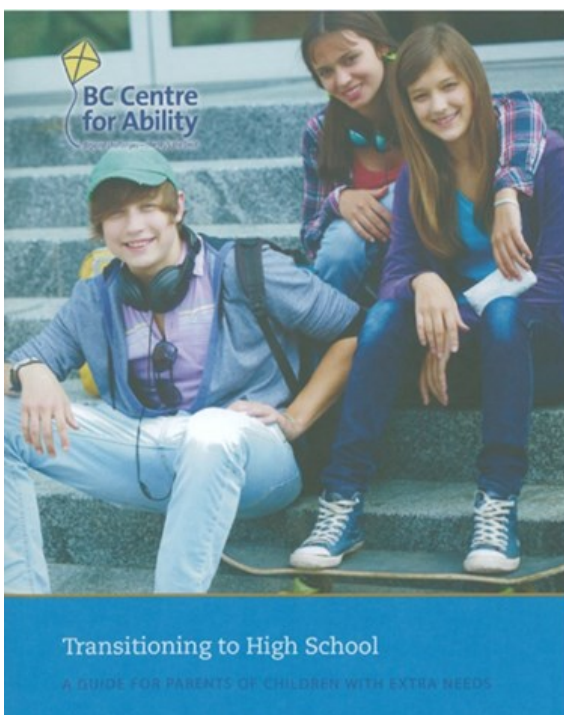
We recently updated our BCCFA workbook titled:

'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 your Program social worker.



2016 Version



2021 Version

The THRIVE Program



What is THRIVE?

THRIVE: Transforming Hiring Relationships; Inspiring Vocational Experiences

An innovative concierge service for youth with diverse abilities that offers one to one coaching, mentorship, advocacy and direct connections to employers.

THRIVE assists post-secondary graduates aged 19-29 create employability foot holds while gaining confidence, tools, experience and the 'how to' towards reaching vocational goals.

The goal of **THRIVE** is to assist young post-secondary graduates (aged 19-29) with diverse abilities in obtaining sustainable employment.

The **THRIVE** approach recognizes that the current system does not always provide suitable opportunities between employers and post-secondary graduates with diverse abilities. Our aim is to support participants in building vocational and employability skills, and assist employers to harness the talent of these individuals. The services are customized to meet the unique needs of each participant and employer.

THRIVE leverages the BC Centre for Ability's many years of experience in vocational services; partnerships with community service providers and BC post-secondary institutions; and links with key employers.

THRIVE works to further perceptual shifts within our local employment landscape while promoting innovation, diversity and inclusion.'

Psychosocial Team Program Updates

Staffing Updates:

Social Work Leader Retirement: Valerie Upton

Val Upton has worked with the BC Centre for Ability for 30 years and acted as the Leader of the Social Work Department for 10 years. We wish Val all the best in her new adventure!

New Social Work 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 our programs.

New Social Worker on the Psychosocial Team: Yeram Ryu



The Psychosocial team is happy to announce that a new social worker, Yeram, has joined us part-time to support Key Worker Support Services and Stepping Stones for the next several months. You will likely see her at groups and hear from her soon!

Upcoming Groups & Workshops

Virtual Parent Networking Group

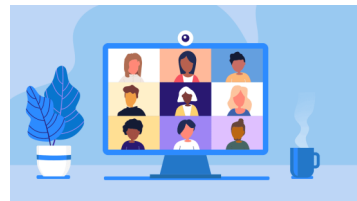
Being offered via Zoom.

Upcoming Dates:

January 28th and February 24th

Time:

5:00—6:30pm



For More Information or to RSVP:

Contact Margot or Dana

Psychosocial Team Staff



Dana Seidel-
Key Worker
Support Services



Margot Merinsky-
Stepping Stones Program



Lena Gilbert-
Family Counselling
Support Services

We want to hear from you!

We are always looking for feedback and welcome your input. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about any aspect of our Program's services, please call or email us.

Program staff can be reached as follows:

**Lena Gilbert, CYSN Family Counsellor, 778-887-3010 or
Lena.Gilbert@bc-cfa.org**

**Dana Seidel, Key Worker, 604.451.5511 x 1257 or
Dana.Seidel@bc-cfa.org**

**Margot Merinsky, Social Worker, 604-451-5511 x 1272 or
Margot.Merinsky@bc-cfa.org**

