

INCLUSION *insights*

MARCH 2026



INCLUSION
WEST NIAGARA



OUR IMPACT

Learn about our Children's Respite Program

Our Children's Respite Program has long been a vital support for families across the Niagara region, offering children a safe, engaging, and growth-focused environment while providing caregivers essential time to rest and recharge. Before the pandemic, the program operated full weekend respite from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon for up to seven children. Like many services, COVID-19 forced a complete shutdown—but our commitment to families never wavered.

Over the past year, our team has worked tirelessly to rebuild the program to its pre-COVID capacity. Recruiting and training staff has been challenging, especially given the specialized expertise required in children's developmental services and the weekend-focused schedule. Even so, we are proud to share that we successfully reopened with

daytime weekend respite and have now expanded to include several weekend overnight sessions. This progress reflects both the dedication of our staff and the importance of this service to our community.

The Children's Respite Program is designed to meet each child's unique needs, supporting their personal growth, independence, and well-being. Programming includes structured learning experiences that reinforce positive behavior, recreational activities that build community involvement, and opportunities for youth to participate in age-appropriate outings and skill-building. Each child's strengths and goals guide their individualized Plan of Care.

Our program provides:

- Behaviour supports, including safety assessments and individualized safety plans completed at intake and annually.
- Life-skills development through participation in daily routines and hands-on activities.
- Community and recreation opportunities that encourage engagement, confidence, and connection.
- We are proud of the strides made this year and remain committed to expanding respite options so more families can access the support they deserve.

For more information on this or other initiatives at the agency, contact us at info@inclusionwestniagara.ca.



Dear Community,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of our new external facing newsletter!



We Are Inclusion West Niagara— We Have Rebranded

Our rebranding reflects who we are: collaborative, future focused, and deeply connected to our community. As our region evolved and our organization prepared for its next chapter, it became clear our name needed to grow with us.

Why We Rebranded

Our former name referenced all three townships, but it was long, hard to use, and often shortened in ways that left some areas unrepresented. As our region began identifying collectively as West Niagara, it was the right moment to realign our identity.

We also faced frequent confusion with similarly named organizations. With

sector reform ahead, clarity matters—for the people we support and for our partners.

In 2025, while celebrating our 60th anniversary and creating a new strategic plan, we saw the perfect opportunity to refresh and position ourselves for the future.

How We Did It

We rebranded *with* our community through: Surveys, focus groups, a tagline contest, a co-design session with staff and people we support. We researched, explored options, and carefully evaluated every idea. The result: a name, logo, and colours grounded in our values, with a heart at the core that represents all we do.

What This Means Going Forward

Our new brand launched in early 2026. While our name is new, our work and commitment remain the same. We continue to support the same people with the same dedication to inclusion and belonging, and we remain proud members of Community Living Ontario.

With renewed energy, we're imagining new ways to serve our community, reduce wait lists, and open doors for more people.

After 60 years, **we're still us—re-energized and ready for what's next.**

Thank you for being part of the journey.

CATHY TURNER, CEO



INCLUSION
WEST NIAGARA

We took this first mailed version opportunity to offer you a gift, and ask in return that you respond to let us know how you'd like to receive this quarterly news, going forward.

- If you prefer to receive the newsletter electronically, please email info@inclusionwestniagara.ca with "Newsletter" as the subject line and provide us with your preferred email address. All future editions will be emailed, rather than mailed.
- If you wish to opt out, please email the same address with the same subject line and simply let us know you wish not to receive our newsletter.

INCLUSION WEST NIAGARA STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

At a Glance



OUR MISSION

We are committed to engaging and working with people who have developmental disabilities, empowering every stage of life through compassion, inclusion, and unwavering partnership, to build the life they want.



OUR VISION

A future without barriers. A world where everyone belongs.



OUR VALUES

Choice. Integrity. Dignity



Enriching Lives Through Connection and Choice

Living life with purpose and possibility

We will embed individualized, person directed services across all programs—expanding opportunities for participation, respite, training, and belonging.



Purposeful Communication and Engagement

Listening, sharing, and belonging

We will strengthen communication with families, staff, partners, and the people we support—through surveys, forums, education sessions, social media, and enhanced EDI engagement.



Innovation, Sustainability, and Smart Practices

Innovating wisely for a strong tomorrow

We will modernize our technology, strengthen cybersecurity, improve data collection, align with evolving compliance standards, and launch environmental sustainability initiatives.



Shaping Our Identity and Future Impact

Clear vision. Shared goals.

We will refresh our brand, promote our new name and vision, and lead collaborative planning for a 10 year housing strategy—expanding choice and community presence.



A Future-Ready Workforce Growing Talent to meet tomorrow's needs

We will strengthen workforce planning, clarify role expectations, increase training in inclusive and trauma informed practices, and expand mentorship and capacity building opportunities.



BEHIND THE SCENES



Our Commitment to Quality, Risk, and Safety

Behind every program we deliver is a robust framework dedicated to quality, risk management, and safety. While our agency has a designated staff member who oversees compliance and monitors our Quality Assurance Measures (QAM) indicators, meeting these standards is truly a collective effort. Across the organization, every team plays a vital role in understanding and upholding the requirements set out in provincial legislation. Managers provide day-to-day oversight, People & Culture ensures recruitment and documentation meet regulatory expectations, and our finance team maintains strong fiscal accountability through careful review and monitoring.

As part of our legislative obligations, we are required to meet a comprehensive set of QAM indicators each year, and we

undergo at least one formal inspection annually. For our children's services, we operate under a separate legislative framework with its own rigorous licensing standards. These inspections and licensing reviews are detailed, thorough, and essential to ensuring the safety and well-being of the people we support. We are proud to share that our agency continues to meet these requirements, reflecting the dedication and professionalism of our entire staff team.

Maintaining compliance is not just about passing inspections—it's about living our commitment to high-quality, safe, and accountable services every day. Our sincere thanks go out to all staff for the care and diligence that keep us operating at this high standard.

ADVOCACY AWARENESS

Meet All United Voices

All United Voices is our agency's proud self-advocacy group, led by 10 dedicated advocates who currently receive services with Inclusion West Niagara. This group is built on the belief that every person has the right to speak up, be heard, and shape the community around them—and we're ready to grow.

We welcome anyone in the community with lived experience in the developmental services sector to join us. Our members take part in meaningful advocacy work, from creating presentations and awareness materials to developing our land acknowledgement.

We also host social events that bring people together, build confidence, and celebrate the strengths and skills of people who have a disability.

If you want to become your own strongest advocate, promote equality for all, help educate the community, plan special events, make friends, and have fun, this is the place for you. All abilities are welcome.

All United Voices meets twice a month, every other Monday, with options to join in person or virtually.

For information or to get involved, contact ckeem@inclusionwestniagara.ca.



IN THE NEWS



Ontario's Developmental Services Sector Under Growing Strain

Ontario's developmental services system is facing mounting pressure, with more than 52,000 people waiting for essential supports such as housing, day programs, and respite. Agencies across the province report that rising costs and long-standing funding gaps are making it increasingly difficult to maintain services and retain qualified staff.

Families are feeling the impact most directly. Many continue to provide full-time care at home while waiting years—sometimes decades—for appropriate supports. Sector leaders warn that without renewed investment, the system will struggle to meet even basic needs.

Despite these challenges, organizations continue to innovate, including new programs designed to better support

individuals with complex needs. As budget discussions approach, service providers are urging the province to prioritize sustainable funding to ensure people with developmental disabilities can access the supports they deserve.

The province-wide **#WaitingToBelong campaign** is shining a spotlight on the urgent need for stronger supports and faster access to services. The campaign amplifies real stories from across Ontario and calls for meaningful action.

More information, campaign stories, and ways to get involved can be found on the **Ontario Developmental Services Network** website at: www.waitingtobelong.ca

GRATITUDE HIGHLIGHT

Gratitude for Our Team

Every day, our 180 staff members bring choice, integrity, and dignity to life through the work they do. From direct support professionals to finance, human resources, maintenance, administration, IT, transportation, team leaders, and management, each person plays a vital role in supporting more than 300 people in our community.

Their dedication, compassion, and deep understanding of true inclusion shape the quality of the services we provide and the relationships we build. They walk alongside people as they create the lives they want, ensuring everyone feels seen, supported, and valued.



180 IWN staff

300 Supported people
in our community

We invite you to join us in thanking our entire team for the heart they bring to this work every single day. Belonging matters—and they make it real.

If you have a shout-out of gratitude to share for our team members, they would be tickled to hear from you! Send your comments to info@inclusionwestniagara.ca.

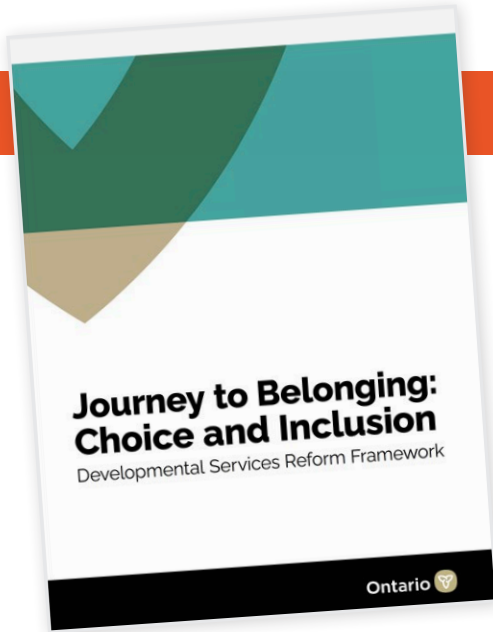
PROVINCIAL UPDATE

Journey to Belonging

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) continues to advance its Sector Reform initiative, *Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion*, a long-term plan to modernize developmental services in Ontario. Current efforts focus on building a more person-centred, equitable, and sustainable system by improving access pathways, strengthening service coordination, and expanding opportunities for people with

developmental disabilities to participate fully in their communities. As reforms roll out, MCCSS is working closely with sector partners, families, and people with lived experience to ensure that changes reflect real needs and support greater independence, inclusion, and belonging across the province.

www.ontarioca.ca/page/journey-to-belonging-choice-and-inclusion



RESOURCE

Allow us to introduce you to Partners for Planning!

They are a national non-profit organization that supports individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in proactive planning for the future. They provide a variety of resources, including a directory of planning supports, to help people and families create a meaningful life. Partners for Planning offers tools and resources,

webinars and learning opportunities and more.

Visit their website today, become a partner, and enjoy the wide range of resources available.

www.partnersforplanning.ca



PLANNING NETWORK



HANDCRAFTED
CONDIMENTS
& JELLIES

AT ALL HANDS IN, our small-batch jams, jellies and salsa are lovingly made by a team of talented partners. Every purchase supports meaningful employment, celebrates abilities, and spreads opportunity, confidence and connection.



Get your jar of Well Preserved goodness, today!

905-975-0616 or wellpreserved@inclusionwestniagara.ca

You are invited!

WATCH FOR IT ...

Upcoming events at the Agency

Estate and Will Planning for Families in Developmental Services

May 6, 2026

5:30-8:00 pm

4330 Lincoln Avenue in the gymnasium.

Limited to 30 families on a first come, first served basis. For information:

shyde@inclusionwestniagara.ca

Community Open House

May 13, 2026

Mountainview Church, 290 Main St. E, Grimsby

3:00-7:00 pm

This event is a drop in and all are welcome to enjoy food, prizes, giveaways and tons of learning. For information:

shyde@inclusionwestniagara.ca

Please consider supporting IWN:

inclusionwestniagara.ca/get-involved#ways-to-support-iwn