Family Respite Services Windsor – Essex

We believe that all children belong in our community.

2024 – 2025 Annual Report

OUR VISION

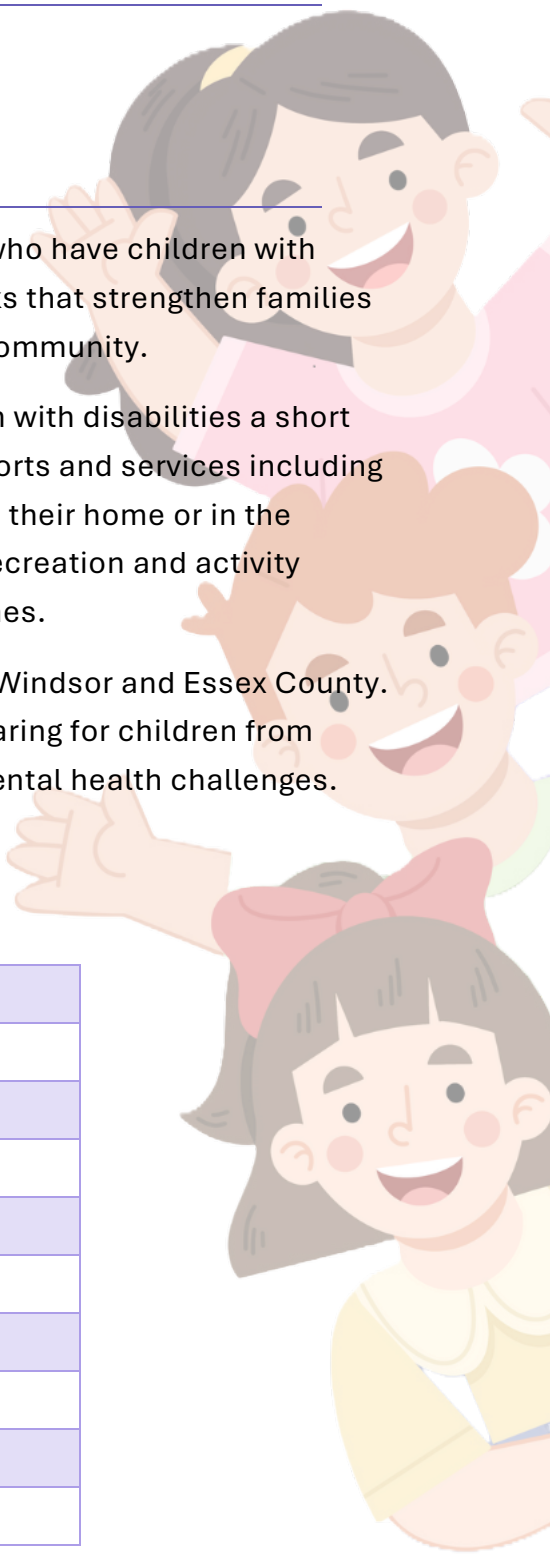
A community where families are strong and all children belong.

OUR MISSION

Family Respite Services works in partnership with families who have children with disabilities. We coordinate support and provide short breaks that strengthen families and contribute to children having meaningful lives in their community.

Family Respite Services provides families who have children with disabilities a short break from caregiving. This is done through a range of supports and services including assisting families to have an individual care for their child in their home or in the community, providing supports for children in community recreation and activity programs and short stays in one of our licensed respite homes.

Family Respite Services began with the vision of families in Windsor and Essex County. The service is designed to provide individualized, flexible, caring for children from infancy to age 18 who have developmental disabilities or mental health challenges.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DANIELLE POIRIER	BOARD CHAIR
LAURIE TIEGS	BOARD VICE CHAIR
SONIA BAJAJ	TREASURER
JUSTINE DANFORD	DIRECTOR
RACHEL HESS	DIRECTOR
ANNA MIJOVCIC	DIRECTOR
CHRIS MOORE	DIRECTOR
JANET MULLEN	DIRECTOR
DOUGLAS SARTORI	DIRECTOR
CATHARINE SHANAHAN	EX OFFICIO

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year, the organization has focused on raising awareness about the importance of respite care—not only among those we serve but also with those in positions to help shape the future of these services. Through ongoing advocacy efforts, we engaged directly with our local Members of Provincial Parliament, bringing forward the voices of families and highlighting the critical role that respite plays in supporting children with disabilities and their caregivers. These conversations were not only encouraging but also affirmed the value of the work we do every day.

Our organization continued its dedicated support for children and their families we serve through a range of impactful initiatives. Our summer programs at the community centres were once again a success, providing inclusive activities that fostered growth and connection. Thanks to the generosity of community donors, we were able to purchase a new swing for one of the respite homes, enhancing the quality of play equipment for the children who access that home. Additionally, we engaged with families, creating valuable opportunities for families to connect, share experiences, and access resources. Each effort, whether it be advocacy, fundraising, or direct service, brings us closer to a future where families are strong and all children belong.

As we step into a new fiscal year, our commitment remains steadfast. We will continue to deliver compassionate, high-quality care and work hand-in-hand with families, partners, and supporters like you.

Thank you for being a vital part of our story. Together, we are creating lasting impact and ensuring that every child and every family can thrive.

With sincere gratitude,

Danielle Poirier
Board Chair

We continue to see the urgent needs of families in our community who have children with disabilities and mental health concerns. More than 400 children were referred last year in addition to the families we currently serve - a 45% increase over the last two years. Other agencies report similar trends. We have worked hard to use our resources to provide specialized respite for children with more complex needs at the Solcz Family Respite Home, to provide specialized mental health respite, to continue to work in partnership with municipalities to support children in the community alongside their peers, to connect families with government programs and to maximize the resources available for children and families. I am thankful for the funding we receive from the Ministry, our generous community, the dedicated staff who walk alongside families every day, and the families who trust us with their stories.

Catharine Shanahan
Executive Director

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Type of Respite Service	Number of children served	Hours of Support per Annum
Support Navigation	1536	
Referrals	444	
Ministry Funded Mental Health Direct Support	107	4,198
Mental Health Circle of Security	11	78
Program Ministry Funded Family Based Direct Support	455	29,452
Specialized Respite	18	6,927
Special Out of Home	5	535
Summer Support	96	2,956
Community Centre Programs	132	8,591
Spago Home Residential	3	25,536
Spago Home Day Camps	10	2,728
Weekend with Friends Program and Day Camps	45	11,262
Purchased Supports at Solcz Home	14	
SSAH Applications	171	
SSAH FRS Managed Authorizations	375	16,093
Community Resource Facilitation	249	
Coordinated Service Planning	41	
Other FRS Administered Respite	15	4,376

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Recruitment	
New Staff	Respite Homes 28, Community Centres 22 Direct Support Providers 79 Mental Health Team 18 Office Staff 7

Support	
Group Sessions	Powerful tools for Caregivers 2x6 week sessions engaged 16 families Sibling Support 4 sessions supported 25 children Building a Full Life 2 sessions with 20 parent participants
Other Community Initiatives	Planning for Success, Enhancing Family Support for Education, Family Safety and Well Being Community Coordinating Committee, Transition Planning
Family Engagement	The family engagement committee continued to provide input for the program. A Trunk or Treat activity was held, and planning occurred for a spring event.
Other	Christmas gifts from the Optimist Club
Respitality is a way for creative partnerships to support families.	Caesars Windsor (6), Horizens BNB (5), Spago (2), Walnut Grove (2), Dry Parlour (1), Salon Cure (4), Best Western Leamington (7), Antonino's Original Pizza(6) ,Jose's B&G(7)

A FAMILY TESTIMONIAL

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the incredible impact Krystle our respite care worker has had on my daughter Alisha's growth and confidence.

Since working with Krystle, Alisha has shown so much improvement—not only in her reading and participation in activities, but in many important areas of her daily life. Krystle has patiently and consistently supported Alisha in learning how to independently bathe, brush her teeth, and take care of her personal hygiene. These are huge steps, and I'm so proud of how far Alisha has come.

One of the most meaningful changes has been in how Alisha is learning to speak up for herself. With Krystle's encouragement and guidance, she is becoming more confident in expressing her needs and feelings—something that used to be very difficult for her due to social anxiety.

Krystle has made everything feel possible for Alisha by creating a safe, understanding, and empowering environment. Her kindness, patience, and dedication have truly made a lasting difference in our lives, and we are so thankful.

With sincere appreciation

Sabba Zaki (parent)

'Our family is extremely grateful for the respite support we have received through Family Respite. I find moments now where I can just be 'Mom.' The time of reprieve widens our capacity. Our daughter's circle of care is expanding too and who doesn't need that?' – Cindy M

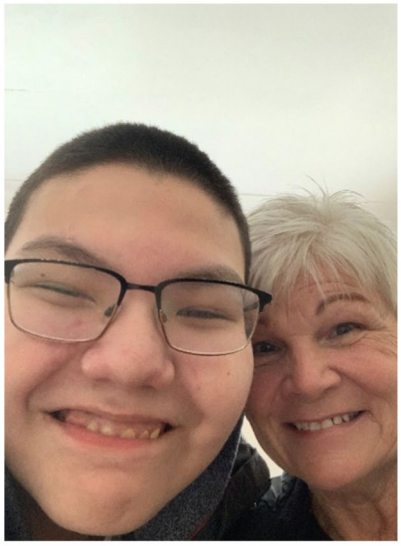
A WORKER TESTIMONIAL

I applied to be a respite provider just a few short years ago when I retired early from my job.

My daughter, who also has been a respite worker for over 10 years said I should apply as she thought I would be great at it and enjoy working with these fantastic kids.

One of my first clients, a young boy of 14, was a perfect match for me. His lovely Mom has few family here to rely on and I was happy to help out.

I enjoy my time with Blake, whether it is going to Tim Hortons after school (which is a ritual now), going bowling, hanging at the park, going for walks, taking him to the movies, swimming, going to Respite functions and so much more. He is a joy to be with and I have learnt so much from him.



He has grown into a very polite young man who is now 16 and towers over me. (LOL)

He has compassion for others and helps me out when I have some chores to get done when I am with him. He is so smart and he teaches me something new everytime I see him.

I cannot say enough about Respite and the work they do for families and exceptional children. I am so happy I took the leap to get involved.

I know that families say they are so grateful for our help, but I feel that I am the grateful one for meeting so many wonderful children who see the world with different eyes. If we could all be so lucky to do that.

Cindy

SPAGO RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Spago is an accessible home that provides respite for youth with exceptionalities. Weekend respite gives families a chance to have a break while the youth are having a fun-filled weekend at Spago! The youth enjoy down time at the home but will participate in multiple activities in the community throughout the weekend. Some of the youth's favourite places to go are Point Pelee, Colasantis, Aerosports, Yo-yo's as well as parks, splash pads and pools throughout the city! Our goal is to provide care for the children in a home-like environment that is fun and nurturing. Three children/youth live at the home in partnership with WECAS.

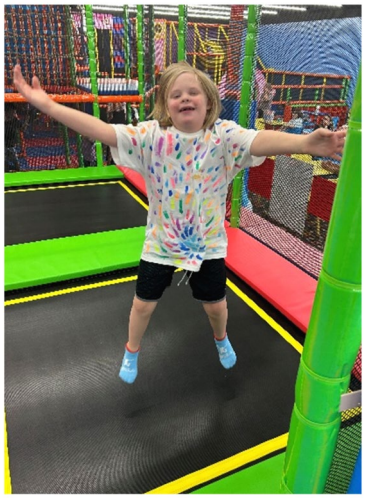
Colasanti's is one of Spago's favourite places to go on a fun outing! Naima joined her friends and went through the petting zoo checking out all of the fun animals. She loved going to visit the turtles!

Maria and Judah enjoyed going to the Farmer's market to check out all of the cool stuff for sale! Judah loved meeting lots of new friends and being out in the community exploring Windsor-Essex county!

Spago received a new swing from generous proceeds from our donors.

SOLCZ FAMILY RESPITE HOME

The Solcz Family Respite Home is a wonderful, welcoming space that is used to its full capacity. Several different kinds of programs are provided at this location. The primary program, Weekend with Friends, provides a weekend stay for up to 5 children most weekends. During their stay, children and youth have opportunities to participate in community outings, play in the amazing backyard and have fun with indoor crafts, games and activities. Throughout the summer, a day camp is offered onsite. **This past year 45 children received support in this program.**



In addition to this, FRS provides specialized support for children each day after school. These supports are designed to support those working on goals through Urgent Response Services for children with autism, or others with intensive support needs funded by Complex Special Needs or other programs. **This past year we have provided an average of 200 hours of specialized support each month.**

We were also happy to use the home for our Sibling Support Group and to work in partnership with Children First to host a Circle of Security group.

MENTAL HEALTH RESPITE SUPPORT

Funding is provided to Family Respite Services as a core mental health service provider. Working collaboratively with local children's mental health centres, including Maryvale, HDGH/Regional Children's Centre and Children First, we provide a dedicated direct support provider who uses respite time to work on goals that are part of a mental health treatment plan. Children served are typically between the ages of 4-18. Time spent with the child may focus on emotional regulation, peer or family relationships, self-esteem and trauma recovery. Most support plans involve weekly time with the child for a period of 20 weeks. This past fiscal year FRS supported 77 children/youth in community based mental health respite and 30 children through out of home support at Maryvale.

COMMUNITY CENTRE SUMMER FUN

This past year, Family Respite Services supported children and youth at community centre-run summer day camp programs. **We provided support at 8 different locations across the Windsor-Essex County, reaching over 100 families.** Children were able to participate in swimming, sports, crafts, and more. Many of the camps took weekly field trips to places like Colasanti's, Cannon Cove, and Adventure Bay. This valuable partnership allowed children with exceptionalities the opportunity to fully participate in local summer camps, alongside their peers. Fostering belonging and inclusion, this program allowed children the chance to fully experience going to camp. With tailored support to each individual child, our staff helped children form meaningful connections within their community, enhance their socialization, and removed barriers to provide a fun, enriching experience.

We appreciate the partnerships with the municipalities of Windsor, LaSalle, Lakeshore, Tecumseh and Leamington and the support received from Canada Summer Jobs, the Sisters of St. Joseph, Emmanuel United Church and the BERL Endowment Fund to make this possible.

SIBLING GROUP

Family Respite Services holds a sibling support group for brothers and sisters of those with developmental and/or physical disabilities. Our sibling group is designed for children aged 8 to 13. This group creates an opportunity for siblings to connect with other children who might have similar experiences, build friendships, receive peer support, have a safe environment to share, learn about their sibling with a disability, and have fun! Our Sibling group consists of recreational activities, outside time, crafts, sharing/discussion circles, and a shared meal. Our sibling group offers fun and rewarding opportunities for siblings! Within the 2024-2025 fiscal year FRS held 4 groups and supported 25 children.

POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CAREGIVERS

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a 6-week educational group offered to caregivers who are caring for a child with a disability. The group focuses on offering information on self-care, managing emotions, building self-confidence, and building awareness of community resources. While learning all of these different aspects, there is also an opportunity to build connections in the community with other caregivers. This educational group offers an opportunity for caregivers to address caregiving challenges, adapt tools for their self-care, and learn new approaches they might be able to use in their day-to-day. Powerful Tools for Caregivers was offered virtually in 2024 at FRS and will be offered again in the near future. We are looking forward to supporting caregivers with this group.

RESPITESERVICES.COM / SUPPORTYOURWAY.CA

Family Respite Services has been involved in helping families recruit direct support providers for respite services for many years. For the past 17 years, we have used a tool called respiteservices.com to connect direct support workers and families. As the host agency for Windsor-Essex, we have been involved in recruitment activities with our local post-secondary school programs through social media and other mechanisms. People interested in providing direct support registered on the site, and staff members from FRS screened these individuals, so families had information that the person had provided a police clearance and other background information regarding their skills and experience. This process was used by many agencies across the province.

This past year:

- 77 new people were screened through this process
- 48 completed the screening and became active
- 45 families used this process
- 325 profiles of workers were sent to families for their review

Respiteservices.com is no longer available and FRS is transitioning to a new platform to continue this valued support for families.

Family Respite means a lot to me. This is my first job here in Canada. I struggled for my first 8 months here, having no job. It was (this work) that gave me hope. You put colours in my life and made a big impact on me....I am truly serving with a joyful heart.

-Direct Support Provider

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

While FRS is very fortunate to have base funding from the Ontario government, the demand for services is greater than the resources available. The support from our community through fundraising and grants is vital to us. These resources enable us to widen our support in several ways, enabling us to:

- Sustain our involvement in supporting children with disabilities to attend community day camps.
- Provide dedicated opportunities for teens to attend community recreation groups to support skill building, friendships and community inclusion.

- Funding for our Super Saturdays and Fantastic Fridays, with sponsorship from **Enwin.**

- We appreciate the ongoing generosity of **Bluewater Pools, Spas and Patio Furniture** who sponsor the Raffle for Respite, with a donation of $5,000. The raffle raised $8,229.
  - The **winners of the raffle** this year were: **Jean Robitaille, Tammy Breault, Krista Gionet**

- Provide gifts for 100 children at Christmas with thanks to the **St. Clair Optimist Club.**
- Install a new swing at our Spago home with the proceeds from our **Bluewater Raffle** and donations from **Legion Branch 594.**
- Purchase equipment for the Solcz Family Respite Home with thanks to **the Realtors Care Foundation/Windsor Essex Real Estate Board** donation of $3,000.

- Assist families who need extra support due to their family situation.
- Add resources to our “respitality” program which focuses on ways to nurture self-care for parents and families.

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- The **Sisters of St. Joseph** provided a grant of $5,000 to assist with day camp opportunities at Gino Marcus Community Centre.

- **Anna's Garden Home and Wellness** provided an opportunity to raise funds at Christmas and in the spring.

- **Sylvia Gounakis and sponsors- Plantscape, Christine Mitchell and Dry Parlour Plus** who raised $1,396 at a wonderful dance party/brunch at **Nico's Taverna**.

- Participants and sponsors, including **Sydney Mitton, Bartlet Richardes, Janisse Orthodontics, Monarch Business, and Experience Home Health** for our **24th Annual Walk on Erie St. event**, which raised $21,014.

- We are also grateful for the new and renewed partnerships that we have built with organizations like **the Southern Cruisers** who collected donations from their members to support our work.

- Thanks to **Williams Food Equipment** for inviting us to participate in their Sharpen for Cause initiative, raising $1,658.

- Host a Trunk or Treat Hallowe'en event through the generous sponsorship of **Mo Abouzeeni** and in partnership with the **Real Canadian Superstore on Dougall.**

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We are proud to have the opportunity to serve children with disabilities and their families across the Windsor/Essex region. The demand for our services continues to grow and it is only through partnerships with these and many other community organizations that we can hope to meet the needs across our community. Together, we build a more inclusive community where families are strong and all children belong.

Thank you to our partners, here are some of the moments and initiatives in 2024-2025 that through this incredible community support brought joy and comfort to the children and families we serve.

We are so thankful to the many sponsors and donors and to those who have attended fundraising events, who donate regularly or to support campaigns like **Giving Tuesday** or this Year's **Holiday Ask Campaign.**

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

2024-2025
Financial Statement

Revenue	
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	$2,840,574
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care	$359,841
Special Services at Home Funding (individual child contracts)	$1,094,256
WECAS Purchased Supports	$653,349
Purchased Supports	$562,273
Grants	$87,536
Fundraising and Donations	$147,506
Interest on Accounts and Investments	$28,520
Offsetting Revenue & Family Contributions	$416,987
Other	$68,091
Total Revenue	**$6,258,933**

Expenses	
Salaries & Benefits	$1,375,134
Direct Support Salaries & Benefits	$1,772,164
Respite Supports	$1,081,109
Other Program Expenses	$1,442,833
Administration	$362,587
Fundraising Costs	$38,903
Other	$110,179
Total Expenses	**$6,182,909**
Excess (shortfall) revenue over expenses	**$76,024**

Contact Us

Family Respite Services Windsor – Essex

2565 Ouellette Ave, Unit 150
Windsor, ON
N8X 1L9

Telephone: 519-972-9688

Fax: 519-972-8902

Website: www.familyrespite.org

Email: info@familyrespite.org