



## Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies

*serving infants, children and young parents - together*

## L'Association Ontarienne des Agences pour Jeunes Parents

*servir nourrissons, enfants et jeunes parents - ensemble*

### January 2026 Newsletter

6 min read



### Welcome to 2026!

Happy New Year to all our OAYPA members! As we kick off 2026, we want to celebrate the incredible work each of you does every day to support young parents and their children across Ontario. Your dedication, creativity, and resilience make a real difference in families' lives—and in our community as a whole.

This month, we're excited to highlight Family Literacy Day on January 27th! It's a great reminder of how important reading, storytelling, and learning together are for children and parents alike. Across our agencies, the programs and supports you offer, whether it's parent-child reading circles, early learning activities, or creative literacy projects—help families grow, connect, and thrive.

### Significant Dates

- January 4 [National Ribbon Skirt Day](#)
- January 21 [Bell Let's Talk Day](#)
- January 27 [Family Literacy Day](#)
- January 29 [National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia](#)

### Member Updates

#### CMHO - Strengthening Partnerships with CMHO to Advance Infant and Young Parent Mental Health

On Dec. 8th, OAYPA's consultation with CMHO brought together 13 members from 11 agencies to provide feedback on CMHO's strategic goals, grounded in the realities of young parent families. Members aligned strongly with CMHO's focus on centering infants, children, and families, noting the importance of elevating lived experience in advocacy and ensuring young parents' voices inform system design. Participants highlighted that young parent agencies are uniquely positioned to provide insights on early childhood development, attachment, and family-centered care, and emphasized the value of CMHO's systems-of-care framing.

Across conversations on access, quality, and outcomes, OAYPA members consistently identified housing as a foundational determinant shaping every part of a young family's mental health journey. Agencies reported that instability directly affects infant wellbeing, caregiving, and family stability.

regulation, service engagement, and the ability to meaningfully participate in treatment. Members encouraged CMHO to integrate housing data, partnerships, and advocacy into broader systems work, noting that mental health strategies cannot be separated from the housing crisis young families face.

Members also expressed enthusiasm for opportunities to piggyback on CMHO's existing training, provincial resources, and quality-improvement infrastructure. Participants encouraged continued partnership to ensure young parents, infants, and young families remain visible across provincial mental health strategies, and to jointly advance equitable access and improved outcomes across the sector. Thank you to all who participated!

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PREVENTING FOOD ALLERGIES IN INFANTS

Research has shifted our understanding of early introduction of common food allergens, and timely guidance for young parents is essential. This webinar provides Young Parent and Infant Agency staff, childcare workers and leaders with clear, evidence-based strategies to support young parents in safely introducing common allergens (e.g. peanuts, egg) to their infants and the importance of keeping it in their diets.

Participants will learn practical steps for early allergen introduction, how to explain the evidence in simple, supportive ways, and how to navigate common challenges—including feeding anxiety and inconsistent guidance. The session emphasizes an equity- and trauma-informed approach to supporting young families, reflecting OAYPA's strategic commitment to strengthening prevention and early intervention across the sector.

**Join us to build confidence in supporting young parents and help reduce the risk of food allergies in the infants you work with.**

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Stephanie Erdle, Pediatric Allergist, BC Children's Hospital
- Jennifer Gerdts, Executive Director, Food Allergy Canada

**When: Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
11:00 - 11:45 AM**

**Register Here:** 

**Food Allergy Canada**  
Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies  
Association canadienne des Agences pour Jeunes Parents

## New Sector Partnership: Preventing Infant Food Allergies OAYPA × Food Allergy Canada

OAYPA is pleased to share a new partnership with Food Allergy Canada to support awareness and prevention of infant food allergies across young parent-serving agencies.

With growing evidence showing that **early and safe introduction of common allergens** (such as peanut and egg) can reduce a risk, this partnership provides frontline staff with clear, evidence-based guidance to support young parents with confidence.

To support agencies, OAYPA is hosting an **upcoming webinar for young parent and infant agency professionals.**

Participants will learn:

- Current evidence on early allergen introduction
- Practical, supportive ways to share this information with young parents
- How to navigate feeding anxiety and inconsistent guidance using an **equity- and trauma-informed approach**

**Speakers:**


Dr. Stephanie Erdle (BC Children's Hospital)  
Jennifer Gerdts (Food Allergy Canada)

**Date:** Wednesday, February 18, 2026

**Time:** 11:00–11:45 AM

Register here: [What You Need to Know About Preventing Food Allergies in Infants – Fill out form](#)

Recording link will be shared with everyone who registers!



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## All Are Welcome to the SickKids Bimonthly Consultation Sessions: Bring Your Team!

SickKids Telemental Health Consultation Sessions, facilitated by Dr. Dafni Sadler and Gillian Thompson are available to all OAYPA agency staff for 2025-2026. These OAYPA-specific consultations are an opportunity to connect with colleagues across the province, fostering a community of practice and offering essential guidance for our daily work. Through dynamic discussions with SickKids and case study presentations by agency staff, we will collectively learn and grow from one another's experiences.

These sessions run twice a month. Feel free to attend as many sessions as you wish.

[Click on the link below to join the conversation!](#)

**Frequency: Monthly 2nd Wednesday (1:00 - 2:30PM)**  
Dates: 10-Sep-25, 8-Oct-25, 12-Nov-25, 10-Dec-25, 14-Jan-26, 11-Feb-26, 11-Mar-26, 8-Apr-26, 13-May-26, 10-Jun-26

**Frequency: Monthly 4th Wednesday (9:00 - 10:30 AM)**  
Dates: 24-Sep-25, 22-Oct-25, 26-Nov-25, 28-Jan-26, 25-Feb-26, 25-Mar-26, 22-Apr-26, 27-May-26, 24-Jun-26

## SickKids Consultation Sessions Reminder

All are welcome to the SickKids monthly Consultation Sessions: Bring Your Team!

Monthly 2nd Wednesday (1:00 - 2:30PM) [Click here to access](#)

Dates: 14-Jan-26, 11-Feb-26, 11-Mar-26, 8-Apr-26, 13-May-26, 10-Jun-26

Monthly 4th Wednesday (9:00 - 10:30AM) [Click here to access](#)

Dates: 28-Jan-26, 25-Feb-26, 25-Mar-26, 22-Apr-26, 27-May-26, 24-Jun-26

## Registration for World Association for Infant Mental Health (WAIMH) 2026: Now open!

WAIMH Conference 2026, is taking place from October 2-6 at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto, Canada. With the theme "Harmony in Div Nurturing the Youngest Minds Around the World," this Congress promises to be an enriching and uplifting five-day event.

[Register today](#) and get ready to join a global community of colleagues dedicated to advancing the field of infant and early mental health. Secure your spot now and take advantage of our Early Bird (Launch Saver) rate. This deal is only available until the first 100 registrations have been completed, so act fast and register today!

## Get Involved

The Ontario Government has announced that [2026 Budget consultations](#) are now open, a process in which nonprofit organizations are invited to take part.

How nonprofits can participate in the consultation process:

- [Online survey](#): Closing date: January 30, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.
- [Online written proposal](#): For those who want to give detailed input, including organizations, businesses, and individuals with spec proposals.

- In-person consultation: Email [MOFconsultations@ontario.ca](mailto:MOFconsultations@ontario.ca) for more information about attending an in-person consultation in your area.

For further information, [click here](#).



## Fundraising & Grants



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### Youth Opportunities Fund

The Youth Opportunities Fund invests in community-led projects that address systemic issues faced by marginalized youth and families prioritizing Black and Indigenous communities. Check out the [grant application deadlines for the coming year](#) for YOF!

- [Systems Innovations Grants](#): This grant is for collaboratives that challenge systemic barriers impacting youth and improve access to services, design new approaches, and create shifts in systems like child welfare, justice, social services, and education.
- [Youth Innovations and Family Innovations grants](#): These grants support grassroots groups led by groups of three or more youth, parents, guardians, and caregivers of children and youth. Through each grant stream, funding supports direct programming to improve the social and economic well-being of youth and families, prioritizing Black and Indigenous communities.

More information:

- [Visit the OTF Webpage](#): Learn about the different grant streams and if your group is a good fit for the Youth Opportunities Fund. Check the pages for each stream to learn about eligibility, the application process, common application mistakes, and more.
- [Dig into their Resources](#): Each grant stream has its own unique requirements and resources. Explore the Expression of Interest questions, sample project plan and budget, Organizational Mentors and more!
- [Attend an Information Session](#)
- [Book a coaching call](#): When you book a coaching call, you get one-on-one guidance from an OTF Program Manager who can advise you about the readiness of your project, whether your group is well aligned with your selected stream and the next steps in the application process.

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## FREE ASQ/DSP Training

We are pleased to continue to be able to offer **free** IEMHP Ages and Stages Questionnaire and Developmental Support Plans training for OAYPA member staff (\$600 value/staff).

Contact Bev (bmackillop@Abionacentre.ca) to be added to the registration list.

February 2026		
Orientation Session 1	Tuesday, February 3, 2026	11:30am - 12:00pm EST
Orientation Session 2	Thursday, February 5, 2026	1:00pm - 1:30pm EST
ASQ Session 1	Tuesday, February 10, 2026	1:00pm - 3:00pm EST
ASQ Session 2	Wednesday, February 11, 2026	10:00am - 12:00pm EST
ASQ Session 3	Thursday, February 12, 2026	1:00pm - 3:00pm EST
DSP Session 1	Tuesday, February 17, 2026	1:00pm - 3:00pm EST
DSP Session 2	Wednesday, February 18, 2026	10:00am - 12:00pm EST
DSP Session 3	Thursday, February 19, 2026	1:00pm - 3:00pm EST
Implementation Session 1	Tuesday, February 24, 2026	10:30am - 12:00pm EST
Implementation Session 2	Thursday, February 26, 2026	1:00pm - 2:30pm EST
Coaching Connect Session 1	Tuesday, May 26, 2026	1:00pm - 2:30pm EST
Coaching Connect Session 2	Tuesday, August 25, 2026	1:00pm - 2:30pm EST
Coaching Connect Session 3	Tuesday, November 24, 2026	1:00pm - 2:30pm EST

## [CCDI UnConference 2026](#): Belonging in complex times: Equity and courage at work

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) is hosting [UnConference 2026](#) "*Belonging in complex times: Equity and courage at work*" invites diverse professionals, DEIA practitioners, change-makers, and leaders to explore how we build resilient, sustainable work systems, policies, and practices.

This virtual conference over two half days is happening **March 4/5th, 2026**. Early bird registration is \$299. Here's what you'll gain:

- Actionable tools and real success stories: Discover proven tools and insights from CCDI Employer Partners and other leaders who achieving measurable, lasting DEIA impact in Canadian workplaces.
- Courage to lead in complexity: Build the confidence and strategies needed to lead inclusive, values-driven workplaces through tin change.
- Collaborative learning and connection: Collaborate and co-create with peers and thought leaders shaping the future of inclusive across Canada.
- Inspiration to move from ideas to action: Translate vision into practice through values-driven actions that build trust and strength workplace culture.



**SafeGuards** is a partnership of provincial associations dedicated to providing culturally informed training on trauma-informed practice, trauma assessment and treatment and related effects of trauma. OAYPA is an Association Member of SafeGuards. OAYPA agencies receive member's rate, which is 12-23% off on SafeGuards training fees. Save an additional 20% off with group registration of 4 or more participants. Download the group registration form [here](#). For more information and to browse their list of courses, see below/click [here](#).

The following courses may be of interest to you:

- [Navigating the N-Word and Racial Slurs](#) January 21 & 22, 2026, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
- [Treating Trauma and Concurrent Substance Use in Adolescents](#) January 29 & 30, 2026, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

**Follow us on social media!**

LinkedIn: [Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies \(OAYPA\)](#)

Instagram: [@OAYPA](#)

Facebook: [Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies](#)

X: [@TheOntarioAsso1](#)

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