



centre FOR
autism
services
ALBERTA

2013-2014
annual report





CARF accreditation for the third year in a row. We remain the only accredited service provider in Supports for Children with Autism in the province.

As part of the ongoing commitment of our staff and board to accommodate the growing number of families that require access to Specialized Services, an additional clinical team was hired. In addition we have created a Service Integration team that will help ensure that our individuals receive seamless integrated services from all areas of our organization.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we will continue to grow our programming for youth and adults, further engage community members through our workshops and outreach programs and strive to be a leading edge provider of services for individuals with autism across the lifespan.

*Sincerely,
John Schiel*

message from the executive director

A year and a half ago the Centre's Board of Directors initiated a change to the Centre's mandate to begin delivering services across the lifespan. This change has had a significant impact on the Centre, the community and to families impacted by autism. In 2012, we delivered services to 242 children and their families, across all programming (PUF, Specialized Services and children's recreational programming). Last year, under the new mandate, we introduced teen and young adult programming which enabled us to reach 724 individuals affected by autism. After a very busy year we have more than doubled that number reaching 1,761 individuals. We are excited about the new programming that was developed and can't wait to get started on some even bigger projects in the new year. Of course numbers are just numbers. What is most important is that all programming generates positive outcomes for person served and their families. I am very pleased to say that while we worked hard on expanding our services, we also ensured that the quality of those programs met the Centre's highest standards. Throughout this AGM report you will find this to be evident. Of course none of this could be achieved without a committed, dedicated and passionate staff. I am proud to serve as their Executive Director. I am equally pleased to have the opportunity to continue the task of addressing the needs for persons impacted by autism. We are just getting started.

message from the president

As President of the board for the last two years, it has been my pleasure to serve the organization and be a part of the great work our staff and supporters are doing in the Autism community. It has been a privilege to work with such an enthusiastic team and fellow board members who are truly passionate about serving our individuals and families.

The Centre for Autism Services Alberta has proudly earned a reputation for delivering innovative services and programs and we have a lot to be proud of this year. In March of we were pleased to receive our

Griffin's Journey

FSCD, Specialized Services, and even the Centre for Autism Services were names we had never heard before. But they have changed our family. Our son Griffin is more than all the statistics on autism – he is a kind, loving and gentle boy who loves his family and has an incredibly infectious giggle!

Griffin is 5½ years old and was diagnosed with autism three years ago. He is non-verbal and does amazingly well communicating with the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). PECS has allowed Griffin to request what he wants and needs, while reducing his frustration. With the incredible support, mentoring and teaching from the Centre, Griffin is now learning to use PECS to comment “I see” when an ETS bus goes by (a favourite!). He can even hear the buses before any of us do and some of the drivers will even wave back to him!

The creation of these goals would not have happened without the hard work of Griffin's team at the Centre.

Griffin and his younger brother Bodhi are starting to communicate in ways (emerging with PECS and physical contact) that are truly heart warming. Bodhi plays a part of the intervention sessions in our home, as this is a family program. We believe that Bodhi will be Griffin's strongest champion and advocate (and hopefully best friend too). Griffin has moved into a grade one class, while continuing to work with the Centre's team. I don't know anyone who works as hard as Griffin does; he is a joy and we are so proud to have him as our son.

Like all families our journey hasn't been easy and filled with its own challenges. What our professional team and interventionists have done is make that journey less scary. We have had some amazing individuals as part of our lives who have taught us how to best support Griffin by finding his areas of interest and focussing on those – most importantly having fun!

– *Andree*





accomplishments

summer camp

Summer Camp continues to be an extremely popular program with our families. In response to family requests we were able to increase capacity for all of our summer camps. Fifty more children were able to attend camp than the previous year. Camps are offered for three age levels:

- Preschool – Little Aces
- School Aged (under 12 years old) – Camp ACE
- Teens – Teen Summer Camp and Teen Culinary Camp

In 2013 we were able to send 144 kids to camp and in 2014 that number increased to 194.

school workshops and training

In response to the positive feedback we received last year regarding our school workshops and the numerous requests we received for more training for school staff, we made a concerted effort to offer more workshops and training. We continued to offer training at the Centre – our foundational Introduction to Autism and also our Next Steps workshops, but have also expanded our training to include professional development through in-services for individual schools; school district wide presentations; presentations at Teacher’s Conventions; and in-services for day cares and community organizations. We presented to 559 school participants representing 38 schools across seven school boards.

grants, fundraising, and donations

The Centre is fortunate to be the recipient of grants, donations and fundraising from various organizations, allowing us to increase our programming opportunities for children and youth.

- The Edmonton Community Foundation – funding our Art Programs
- Partnered fundraising with the Rotary Club has enabled us to have sustainable funding for our Summer Camps as well as allowing us to diversify our young adult programming
- Autism Speaks Canada has partially funded a number of programs for our teens and young adults
- We received a second year of support through Knifeware and President’s Choice which enable us to expand summer Camps
- Increased donations from private individuals and the general public

centre for autism services alberta students association

This group of University of Alberta students was formed in September 2011 and is dedicated to raising funds for the Centre and creating awareness about autism on campus. It has a ten member executive of which one member sits on the Centre’s board of directors. In April, 2014 the group hosted an interdisciplinary conference called Discovering Autism, which took place at the University of Alberta with presenters from various disciplines. Members of the public, families and staff from the Centre, clinicians, students and staff from the University were invited to attend.



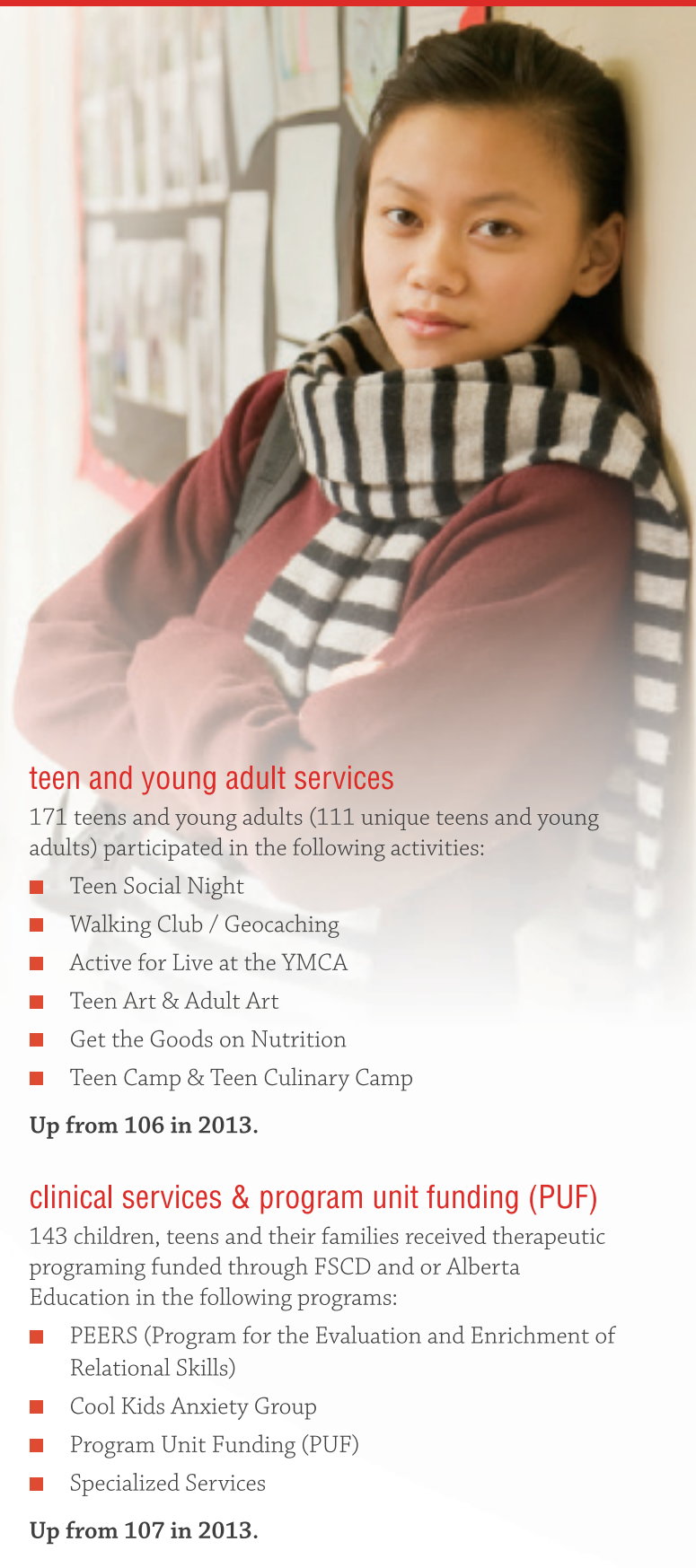
Cameron in the Kitchen

When my son Cameron started attending programming at the Centre, it opened our lives up to many new experiences and opportunities for Cameron to grow, meet other children and most importantly to be accepted for his wonderful gifts. Through the Summer Camp, cooking and sports programs, Cameron has gained new skills, become more confident in socializing with others and has developed an interest in helping in the kitchen at home.

As a mother, I have been able to make some great friendships with other parents who face the same struggles and triumphs as we do and I have gained an invaluable network of support where I can learn from their experiences. The staff at the Centre have been able to give my husband and myself a chance to recharge when we needed it through the respite program and the care that Cameron receives at the Centre has been amazing. Most importantly I have seen Cameron find a place where he is safe, is given the chance to learn in new ways where he truly feels like he belongs.

– *Jeanie*





our programs and services

programming and services 2013/14

1,761 individuals participated the following programs over the year, up from 724 in the previous year.

services for families

678 participants (171 unique families) participated in the following family centered activities:

- Attended 23 Parent Workshops
- Participated in month Family Night programming
- Enrolled in the Little Aces playschool
- Received respite through the Centre Based Respite program
- Came out to the annual Valley Zoo event

Up from 193 participants in 2013.

recreation and camp programming

210 children participated in our recreation and camp activities (139 unique children)

- Camp ACE (5 to 12 rears)
- Little Aces Camp (preschoolers)
- Community recreational programs (Kitchen Kids,, Extreme Edge skating, Fun with Art, Kickstart Soccer, Basketballers, gymnastics)

Up from 156 in 2013.

school and community workshops

559 educators and community participants attended 38 school/community workshops including:

- Intro to Autism
- Next Steps
- In-services to Individual schools
- District Wide PD/Teachers Convention
- Talks to children at school or daycare about ASD
- In-service for daycare and community organizations

Up from 23 workshops and 162 participants in 2013.

teen and young adult services

171 teens and young adults (111 unique teens and young adults) participated in the following activities:

- Teen Social Night
- Walking Club / Geocaching
- Active for Live at the YMCA
- Teen Art & Adult Art
- Get the Goods on Nutrition
- Teen Camp & Teen Culinary Camp

Up from 106 in 2013.

clinical services & program unit funding (PUF)

143 children, teens and their families received therapeutic programming funded through FSCD and or Alberta Education in the following programs:

- PEERS (Program for the Evaluation and Enrichment of Relational Skills)
- Cool Kids Anxiety Group
- Program Unit Funding (PUF)
- Specialized Services

Up from 107 in 2013.

stakeholders

Throughout the year, the Centre gathers information from families and other stakeholders (employees, community etc.). The collected information is used to make informed decisions around programs and service delivery. Four surveys were delivered over the course of the last fiscal year: Person Served Survey, Measure of Processes of Care, FSCD Six Month Family Outcomes Survey, and Employee Engagement Survey.

persons served survey

As part of the Centre's ongoing commitment to quality service and family centered care, information from families is gathered on a yearly basis. The information below is from 113 families from this reporting period:

- 60.2 % of families responded that another language, beside English, is spoken at home (68 families)
- 59.3 % of families identified their culture as something other than Canadian (67 families)
- 48.7 % of families perceived some type of barrier(s) in receiving services at the Centre (55 families)
 - 23.9% identified transportation specifically as a barrier
 - 23 % identified childcare specifically as a barrier
- 39 % of families identifies themselves as lower income requiring financial assistance for resources or groups (44 families)
- 63.7 % of families have a traditional 2 parent, nuclear family (72 families)
 - 16.8 % are single parents
 - 16.8 % have extended family living with them

"Art class is soooooo cool because I can draw fire alarms, everybody is nice, lots of friends go there."

- Liam, age 8

The Centre is very aware that we serve a multicultural, multi-national, diverse community. Staff are trained yearly in multicultural awareness.

With respect to the barrier of childcare, we have addressed this to some extent by providing free childcare for our specialized services families during team meetings and for all workshops and training that parents wish to attend. We have many families using this service.

Where child care is still an issue for families the Centre will continue to look for ways to assist families in overcoming this barrier.

The number of families identifying themselves as lower income and requiring financial assistance for resources or groups has increased by 6% from 2010/11. The Centre works closely with our funder – FSCD, to maximize all funding opportunities for families that are available to them. The Centre also uses grants, fundraisers, and donations to supplement programs for our families.

The Centre serves a number of single parents. We realize that we must be sensitive to their needs and recognize that this may increase the challenges of having a child with autism.

There has been a significant increase in the number of families who have extended family living with them. This is perhaps both a cultural reality for a number of our families and/or a realization of the practicality and need for additional family members helping to care for a child with autism.



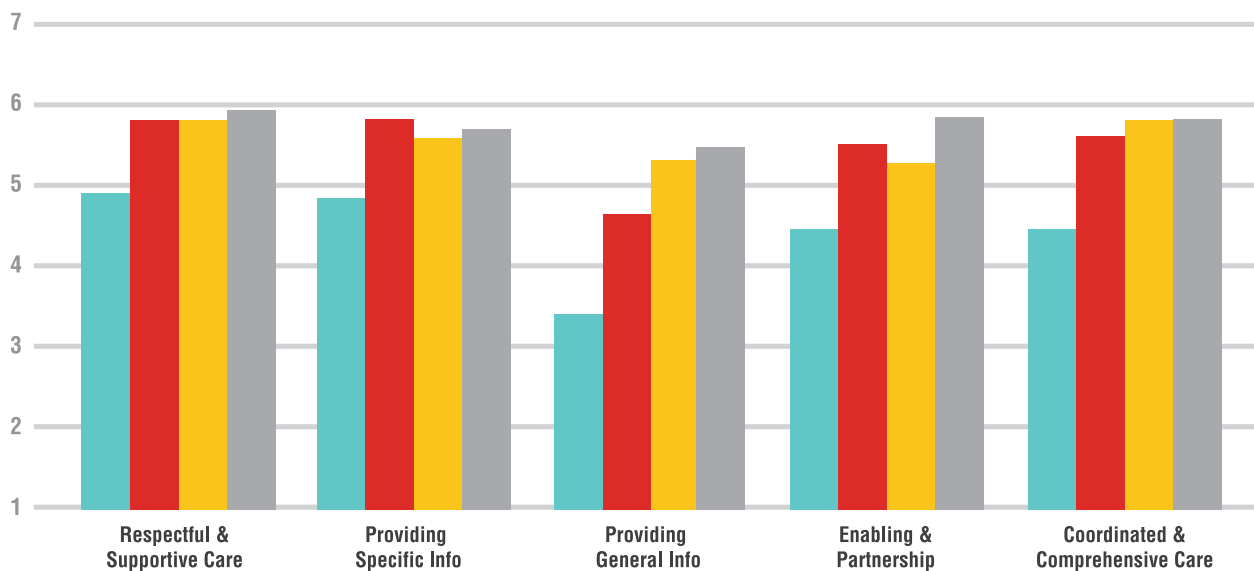
measure of processes of care (MPOC)

The Centre uses the MPOC as part of our program evaluation. The MPOC is a standardized questionnaire designed to evaluate family centered care from the perspective of the families. Scores are based on a 7 point scale with 1 meaning – ‘not at all’; and 7 meaning – ‘to a very great extent’.

The MPOC was administered to families in May 2014 via telephone interview by an unbiased individual with no connection to the clinical staff or families.

55 families were surveyed. An average was taken of the following five domains:

MPOC domains (parents)



As evidence by the graph above we continue to improve every year in our family centered practices.





FSCD six-month survey

The Centre continues to collect and analyze data obtained from the FSCD Outcomes Questionnaire. Staff conduct the Outcomes Questionnaire at the 6-month mark of every family's contract year. There are 12 questions and for the purpose of this report the highest and lowest ratings have been shared.

The following question averaged the **highest rating** by families:

How comfortable are you in contributing your thoughts and ideas at meetings with professionals in order to make decisions that matter to you?

Average rating of **6.24** across all families interviewed
In keeping with our core value of open and honest communication with families, we continue to score extremely high on this question. The Centre takes great pride in being family centered and will continue to strive to excel in this area.

The following question averaged the **lowest rating** by families:

To what extent does your child engage in positive social relationships?

Average rating of **3.27** across all families interviewed

For many children, a core deficit of Autism is social interaction. It is not unexpected that the question related to this deficit: "To what extent does your child engage in positive social relationships?" scores the lowest (every year since the Centre has administered the FSCD Outcomes Questionnaire this question has scored the lowest).

Social skill building is an integral part of all of our children's service plans and is addressed through many of the specific goals and strategies on those service plans. Centre staff continually work on building social skills with our children and we have challenged ourselves to improve and grow in our own competencies in order to help our children build positive social relationships.

We provide many opportunities for our children and families to participate in community and recreational groups that naturally foster social relationships and it continues to be a growth area for the Centre.



employee engagement survey

69% of salaried staff completed the survey in April 2014. The results below are the Centre's top scores:

- Overall, I feel satisfied working at the Centre for Autism Services Alberta
93% positive
- The Centre is a positive place to work
96% positive
- The work I do makes a difference in the lives of the people I serve
99% positive
- I get a sense of accomplishment from the work I do
99% positive

The results below are the four bottom scores:

- I feel that my pay is adequate for the role I have – 77%
- I am aware of the organizations' grievance procedure and how to make a complaint – 81%
- The Centre for Autism Services Alberta orientation prepared me for my job – 84%
- I feel the Centre for Autism Services Alberta demonstrates the appropriate levels of appreciation for my work contribution and or accomplishments in a timely fashion – 85%

The Centre consistently scores very high every year on this stakeholder satisfaction objective.

The above scores are not a surprise. Individuals working with children and families affected by autism spectrum disorder have a passion for their job and the above scores are reflective of this.

To serve children and families and see the growth in both; to experience families' rewards and frustrations; and to unlock the hidden potential in children is the ultimate reward for the Centre's staff.

Active for Life; "I want to be strong and learned how to play basketball, floor hockey and games in the pool with my friends. I now play those games with my brother on the weekend."

– David, age 16

annual volunteer resources report – 2013/14

The Centre for Autism Services Alberta has a strong, skilled and caring team of volunteers that provide important support to our families. The majority of volunteers are post-secondary students who attend the University of Alberta. Their reasons for volunteering are varied but do have common themes – they want to give back to their community and they need the practical volunteer experience.

During the 2013/14 fiscal year 61 volunteers contributed 2,756 volunteer hours to the Centre.

“Being able to make a difference and seeing how far the kids have come since they started at the Centre really inspires me to just be a better person and help others.”

– Centre Volunteer

An increasingly important aspect of the volunteer component is the Centre’s University of Alberta Student’s Association. This group is a registered U of A club and that works actively on campus on behalf of the Centre. They ran a successful first conference in early April of 2014 titled, “Discovering Autism.” Their fundraising activities include barbeques, bottle drives, green onion cake and samosa sales. They make an annual donation to the Centre.

Jessica Finds her Voice by Giving Back

Jessica Pigeau was diagnosed with ASD and co-morbid OCD in her late adolescence after years of struggling with unidentified developmental issues and social anxiety. She is now a student of language and culture at the University of Alberta, where she completed her undergraduate thesis on depictions of autism in fiction. She began public speaking as part of an ongoing effort to translate her thoughts into words and to bridge the gap of understanding between autistic and neurotypical experience.

It has long been my view that there is great need for those who will give their time, skills and experience to the essential work of supporting those with autism and to the immense task of advocating for their rights and dignity. It is my view that there is a great need for autistics to involve themselves in this advocacy. However, for several years, that opinion was entirely abstract – a theory never put into practice, never given form by my actions.

It is in this context that I was first offered the opportunity to engage with the advocacy apparatus here in Edmonton. I was mildly baffled by the enthusiasm with which others approached the idea of my inclusion and my participation – after all, I had no particular skill, no particular expertise to lend. However, to involve myself was the action most consistent with my values, my belief in the importance of autistic self-advocacy.

Now having expressed these values in the arena of volunteerism, one must give voice to the difference between passive compassion and active compassion – we shy away so often from either, from the vulnerability of caring and sincerity, but to love and to live actively lends one the strength of efficacy and frees one from the chains of inaction. The world is no longer immense and beyond our control – our goals no longer distant and futile, but within our power to achieve. It all seems silly and impossible from afar, but closer we see that much of what stands in our way will fall as a matter of course should we remain firm and think always beyond our current limitations.

– Jessica Pigeau, Volunteer



community support

The Centre is also fortunate to receive financial support or donation of goods from the community. The Centre appreciates all contributions, which allow us to enhance our programming and services to families and individuals with autism. Our community recreation programs need the support of the community and individuals because government does not fund them. Over the last year the following organizations and individuals made significant contributions to the Centre. The Centre is also fortunate to receive financial support or donation of goods from the community. The Centre appreciates all contributions, which allow us to enhance our programming and services to families and individuals with autism. Our community recreation programs need the support of the community and individuals because government does not fund them. Over the last year the following organizations and individuals made significant contributions to the Centre.

- AGLC – Government of Alberta
- Autism Speaks Canada
- Canada Summer Jobs
- Car Heaven (Automotive Recyclers of Canada)
- Centre for Autism Services Alberta Students' Association
- Charlene Wong
- City of Edmonton
- Edmonton Community Foundation
- Gateway Rotary Club
- Knifewear Inc.
- Park Paving Ltd.
- President's Choice Children's Charity
- Private donor who has supported cooking classes for the past 6 years
- Rick and Brune Sinneave
- Sinneave Family Foundation
- Microsoft
- TechSoup Canada
- Technology North

The Centre is also in receipt of donations from individuals that have donated through Canada Helps and Canadian Online Giving throughout the year.

robust reds for rotary

This past year the Centre was the dedicated charity for Gateway Rotary's 8th annual Robust Reds event. Many of our families and long-time supporters of the Centre rallied to gather silent auction items for the event. We are grateful for everyone's contributions. The following individuals and company's contributed to the success of this event; Edna McHarg, Quilliam Family, Linda and Roger Wild, Modin Family, McBains Family, Nikki Lazar, Ben and Grant Kurtz, Ling Huang, Cheri Diamond and Chris LaChance.

I also want to acknowledge and thank everyone who purchased tickets, invited all of their friends and supported the event in any way they could. Thank you.

"My favourite part of Active for Life is I get to see my friends from the Centre."

– Amy, age 17





4752 – 99 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5H5
phone: 780-488-6600
e-mail: info@centreforautism.ab.ca
website: www.centreforautism.ab.ca



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