



As a mom, I know that parenting is rewarding but it can also be hard, even at the best of times. We all know that the last eight months have not been the best of times.

At Family & Children's Services, our front line workers hear about worries that parents have right now, from childcare to school to the threat of illness. In addition, the pandemic response has caused significant financial hardship and social isolation for many families in the Waterloo Region. All of this has made things even more difficult for parents like Melanie*:

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“As the months went by, I just didn't know how we were going to manage. We lost our jobs. Rent and food were a huge worry. And trying to keep kids occupied in an apartment? I was exhausted. I could feel myself slipping, feeling more irritable and frustrated, and finding it hard to keep going each day.”





Families across the region are struggling as they face the ongoing challenges presented by COVID19. The pandemic, combined with pre-existing factors like poverty, mental health issues, addictions, systemic racism, and/or trauma, is disproportionately impacting already vulnerable families. The impacts are even more severe among Indigenous and Black families.

This is a season that usually highlights togetherness. Being with people we love and engaging in shared traditions creates memories and bonds that last a lifetime. The holidays are going to be different this year but our memories help ease the difficulty of being apart. Our connections and bonds, nurtured through many small but meaningful interactions, build resiliency.

That's what we want for the families we serve – that they have the opportunities to develop the same kind of connections within their family and in the community. Resilience gives individuals and families the ability to move beyond the chaos and trauma they have experienced or are experiencing. It allows them to withstand but also surmount adversity and to move forward in their lives. Resilience builds hope.

However, more families are experiencing risk factors for child abuse and neglect because of increased isolation and financial hardship related to the pandemic. As a result, there is an urgent need for additional prevention programs that offer families opportunities to connect and build resilience and ultimately, reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Prevention programs remain seriously underfunded by government. That's why we need your help to fund prevention programs for the more than 2500 children, youth and families across Waterloo Region who are at risk of child abuse and neglect.

Your gift can provide parents like Melanie with the support they need. From practical items like groceries, hand sanitizer or masks to facilitating access to mental health care to offering respite to parents through programming for their children to ensuring opportunities for cultural connection, your gift will support parents. This means better outcomes for children. Your gift today will make an immediate difference now and have a lasting impact on generations to follow.

As you connect with loved ones this season, be it through a screen or from six feet away, please pause to reflect on how your gift is helping other families do the same and how your generous support will ensure that families are able to build connection and resilience. Those connections are vital and are ultimately what will prevent child abuse and neglect in Waterloo Region. You can make it happen.

With gratitude,



Dr. Jill Stoddart

Director of Research, Development, & Outcomes, Family & Children's Services Foundation

PS Your gift will give families the support they need during this difficult time and help build a caring community where children and families can thrive. We invite you to visit our online Gifts of Hope Catalogue to see all the ways your gift can support children, youth and families. **Visit www.facsfoundation.org for the link!**

**Names and identifying details have been changed for privacy of service users.*

IN SUPPORT OF FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES FOUNDATION

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