



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Systems Navigator Initiative launches to address over-representation and barriers in child welfare services**

KITCHENER: The Resilience Project announces the launch of the Systems Navigator Initiative, a multi-sectoral partnership with Kinbridge Community Association, African Family Revival Organization, Adventure4Change, Somali Canadian Association, Ethiopian Association, Eritrean Association, CAYA (Canadian Aweil Youth Association), and Healing of the Seven Generations.

“A systems navigator is someone who works with individuals to ensure that they have access to the programs and services intended to support them,” says Dr. Jill Stoddart, Director of Research, Development, and Outcomes at Family & Children’s Services. “It is not about people learning to navigate the system, but the system learning to navigate the needs of people.”

System navigators are crucial support for Indigenous, Black, and Racialized individuals and families who are involved with the child welfare system. These groups are overrepresented in child welfare and face barriers related to systemic racism, poverty, language, culture, mental health, and isolation.

Each Systems Navigator will work with individuals from Indigenous, Black, and Racialized communities and act as liaisons, advocating for them and serving as guides between the child welfare system and families. This initiative is needed to address the system-level barriers within child welfare which have differential impact on Indigenous, Black and Racialized communities.

Drawing on their knowledge of systemic racism and inequity, the system navigators will help individuals and families:

- Understand and navigate the child welfare and other systems (e.g., health, education, housing, law enforcement, criminal justice);
- Develop personalized plans based on diverse needs of individuals;
- Connect to resources and supports in the community;
- Conduct “outreach” to meet the individuals and families where they are in the community;
- Create inclusive opportunities, partnerships and collaborations across systems; and,

- Participate in advancing our understanding of system-level barriers, in particular racism, which need to be addressed within child welfare and other systems.

The services of the system navigators are open to the community. “We encourage anyone who feels they need support to reach out,” says Dr. Stoddart.

The system navigators can be reached through the following partner agencies:

Kinbridge Community Association

System Navigator: Afifa Sala, [afifa@kinbridge.ca](mailto:afifa@kinbridge.ca)

African Family Revival Organization

System Navigator: Fadhwa Yusaf, [fadhwa@afrofamily.ca](mailto:fadhwa@afrofamily.ca)

Adventure4Change

System Navigator: Feven Gebremariam, [feven@adventure4change.org](mailto:feven@adventure4change.org)

Healing of the Seven Generations

System Navigator: Scott Norton, [snorton@healingofthesevengenerations.ca](mailto:snorton@healingofthesevengenerations.ca)

### **The Resilience Project:**

Since 2014, The Family Centre, Family & Children Services of the Waterloo Region (FACS), and 18 community organizations have worked together to co-create and develop the Resilience Project which aims to prevent child abuse and maltreatment through following initiatives.

- Collaborative Programs for children, youth, and families
- Learning and training opportunities for organizational growth
- Innovation, research, exploration and knowledge exchange
- Community initiatives for social justice and equity

The Resilience Project gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support of the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation and the Family & Children’s Services Foundation.

For further information about The Resilience Project visit: <https://resiliencecollective.ca/>

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