



Annual Report

2015-2016

Networking and Partnerships

Connexions Resource Centre continued to strengthen its position as the 'hub' for accessing health and social services information in English and addressing the needs of the English-speaking community. Networking and partnership development, representation on local and regional structures, knowledge development, supporting institutions to adapt services in English and community leadership and development are key strategies that support Connexions in achieving its mission.

Although the reorganization of the health and social services system has significantly changed the context within which we used to function, Connexions has sought to adapt to the changes. The absence of the Regional Access Committee has been a challenge seeing as it provided an important link to the health institution. We look forward to a renewed Regional Access Committee in 2016 – 2017 so that we can continue to collaborate and contribute to the implementation of the Regional Access Program. Despite this challenge, communication with the CISSSO has been ongoing and positive.

Representation

The health and well-being of a community requires collaboration from a variety of stakeholders from various sectors and levels of government. One of Connexions strategies has been to position itself within key structures to be able to represent the needs of the English community and to ensure that local, regional and provincial policies / initiatives are adapted to the needs of English-speakers. For example, Connexions played an active role in linking the English school board with a regional initiative to conduct an important survey (PROPEL) on healthy lifestyles and school perseverance in all Outaouais schools. Results of this survey have provided new and important information that will assist schools and organizations in the development and planning of healthy lifestyle activities and promote concerted actions amongst all stakeholders in order to best meet the needs of our youth.

This past year Connexions has been an active member of nine local and/or regional committees (see list below) that deal with a variety of issues such as healthy lifestyles, caregivers, seniors and youth. As well, Connexions also participated at regional forums and training sessions that promoted the sharing of best practices and provided networking opportunities. Examples of topics covered at these events were: Improving the quality of life for seniors and caregivers; healthy lifestyles; collaborative interventions for the development of pre-school aged children; best practices for successful interventions with vulnerable families; sustainability of initiatives post-funding; and, social development.

- Table de concertation des aînés et retraités de l'Outaouais
- Table des aînés de Gatineau
- APPUI Outaouais
- Table de concertation prévention du suicide des Collines

- Table de concert-action saines habitudes de vie de Gatineau
- Commission des aînés de la Ville de Gatineau
- Table des partenaires secteur d'Aylmer
- Comité Hull en santé
- Regional Committee for the PROPEL survey

Organizational Development

This year, Connexions' Board of Directors undertook a number of activities that contributed to the development of the organization. In the fall of 2015, Board members participated in a professional development session on key concepts of good governance. This also provided the opportunity for the Board to identify priorities such as effective communication, strategic planning, policy development and clarifying membership. Over the course of the year, the Board has reviewed and updated its conflict of interest policy, statement of values and code ethics and complaints procedure, which resulted in amendments to the by-laws. This spring, the Board undertook a strategic planning process, which included a 360 evaluation of the organization that involved Board members, staff and partners. As a result of this process a new vision statement was developed and three key priorities were identified:

- Enhance organizational effectiveness;
- Strengthen human resources;
- Reinforce a partnership approach to program development and delivery.

The new Vision statement, 'To be a recognized leader at creating connections to enrich the health, vitality and well-being of the English-speaking community', will be validated with the community and stakeholders in 2016 - 2017.

Connexions' Outaouais Attraction and Retention Project for Health and Social Services Professionals 2014-2018 Project



In March 2015 Connexions organized a health career fair called **Adventures in Health Careers** at Philemon Wright High School. This event included three workshops organized in collaboration with St. John's Ambulance and the Western Quebec School Board to promote careers in health and social services aimed at grade 9 students. CEGEP Heritage College Nursing Program and the Western Quebec Career Centre health programs also participated with kiosks to inform all students about their programs. Approximately 150 students participated. The St. John Ambulance workshop explored health careers in the context of emergency and disaster management. A second workshop focused on careers related to mental health facilitated by a social worker, and included some mental health prevention mini-sessions of yoga and on anxiety. The third workshop consisted of a Q & A panel of professionals to increase student knowledge of professions and education required in a variety of health and social services fields such as social work, medicine, nursing and speech therapy. Seven professionals working for public institutions gave their time and answered questions from students. The day was a huge success and we look forward to holding a similar event at D'Arcy McGee High school next year.

McGill Health and Social Service Community Leadership Bursary

Thanks to Health Canada's Official Languages Program via McGill University's Training and Retention of Health Professionals Project, Connexions has been able to continue to offer the Bursary Program. This year, three local students received bursaries from Connexions Resource Centre to complete their studies in the field of health and social services. This financial award helps to promote access to health and social services in English by supporting future bilingual professionals within Québec's health and social services system.



Dorothy Down-Cameron (McGill University, Nursing) of Aylmer, Anisha Mehreja (McGill University, Nursing) of Wakefield, and Jennifer MacKenzie (Heritage College, Nursing) of Chelsea, have each received financial support for a total of \$22,500 for the 2015-16 academic year. In exchange for the financial support, bursary recipients must demonstrate their involvement in the community and agree to pursue careers in Outaouais public health and social services institutions for one year following graduation.

Since 2011, sixteen scholarships totalling \$86,250 funded by the McGill project have been awarded by Connexions to bilingual students from the Outaouais enrolled in health care or social service studies. To date, seven of those students are employed in Outaouais health institutions as nurses.

Health Promotion Programs and Activities

An important aspect of Connexions' work consists of offering health promotion information and activities to all age groups (see attached Health Promotion Programs and Activities at a Glance). These programs, videoconferences, information sessions, and focus groups allowed us to reach our clientèle in a direct way. Through our collaboration with the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB) we continue to offer health promotion activities and healthy lifestyles information to youth and families and children.

Families and children 0 - 5

Itsy Bitsy Tots Playgroup

The Itsy Bitsy Tots playgroup took place once a week from mid-September to mid-June and is in its 4th year of existence. The playgroup continues to provide a social support network for English-speaking



parents in Gatineau while integrating health promotion activities and information. Approximately 6-10 parents attended the playgroup regularly with up to 12 children on a given day. Pierre Elliott Trudeau School continues to provide space in the library for the play group. The CISSS de l'Outaouais promotes the program to their clients and assists with health information and resources.

Thanks to renewed funding from our partnership table, Hull en santé, Connexions has been able to hire a facilitator to organize the playgroup. Parent volunteers help facilitate the sessions by providing assistance with activities such as cooking, arts & crafts and music, but also with promotion through their own Facebook pages. A number of presenters and/or regular activities have taken place this year:

- The Québec en forme-funded gross-motor facilitator at PETES provides some time to the playgroup each week to do fun physical activities with the children;
- A speech language pathologist with the CISSSO, came to speak to the group about language development in children, signs to look for and tips on how to encourage healthy speech;
- A local dietician visited to discuss ways to help with fussy eaters;
- A yoga teacher visited several times to share Karma Yoga with the group; and
- A parent-musician joins in to play music and sing songs.



School Readiness Kits

In collaboration with the WQSB and the Early Childhood Education program at CEGEP Heritage College, Connexions developed and assembled 250 School Readiness Kits for parents with children 0 – 5 years of age. The objective was to provide resources for English-speaking families of the Outaouais to help them prepare their children for the transition from home or daycare to school. The contents of the kit focus on parenting skills to establish routines and healthy lifestyles, access to health and community services, and early literacy and fine-motor activities in preparation for entry to school. The kits were distributed during kindergarten open houses at targeted schools of the WQSB, as well as through partnership tables (Hull en Santé and les Partenaires du secteur Aylmer) to CLSCs, daycares and other organizations working with English-speaking clients.



Youth

Collaboration with the Community Learning Centre

Connexions and the Community Learning Centre (CLC) at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School (PETEs) share space and have worked together on such programs as the Itsy Bitsy Tots Playgroup, Eat Gud, Feel Gr8, and in developing activities that promote healthy lifestyles for English-speaking students and their families. The CLC provides a link to PETE's school to promote parenting workshops, nutrition month activities and health and social services information.

This year, a workshop was offered to parents in Gatineau (Aylmer, Hull, Gatineau) called "Disciplining Differently: Healthy Relationships for Health Development" with Principal David McFall of Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary presenting. Connexions was also able to share the presentation by videoconference with the G. Thérberge School in Témiscamingue.



The shared office space has allowed informal sharing of resources and information with the CLC, teachers and administration of the school. At the suggestion of Connexions, PETEs administration has met with Centre de pédiatrie sociale to explore support for their most vulnerable families. Teachers seek information for families so that they can access health services. The CLC has invited Connexions to participate on its Safe and Healthy School Community Committee to respond to the PROPEL survey and find ways to promote healthy eating and active living at the school.

E@ Gud, Feel Gr8! Program



The E@ Gud, Feel Gr8! program is an after-school program for elementary students to promote healthy eating habits and a physically active lifestyle. The program motivates students to make healthier life choices focussing on cooking with the food they like to eat and physical activities they enjoy. The aim is to improve their physical and mental well-being, to encourage them to make healthy food choices, and to share their new knowledge and habits with their families and fellow school mates. A manual has been created to guide the facilitator.

In 2015-16, the E@ Gud, Feel GR8 program was offered by Connexions Resource Centre in three schools of the Western Quebec School Board. In Aylmer, the project was funded by the Partenaires du Secteur Aylmer and delivered at Lord Aylmer and South Hull Elementary Schools. In Hull the project was funded by Hull en Santé and took place at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School. In all three schools the program ran for 15 to 20 weeks with grade 5 and 6 students.

Each session includes physical activity whether time in the gym playing games chosen by the students, or walking with pedometers outside and in the school hallways. New this year, the groups also tried yoga with students leading their classmates in different poses. In the classroom, topics included: reading food labels, eating healthy snacks, learning about food preparation, sugar content in drinks, and the Canada Food Guide and the four food groups. Students especially enjoyed time in the kitchen and being introduced to new foods.



In light of the loss of funding from Québec en forme next year, Connexions has worked with the schools to integrate elements of the program in daycare activities.

Healthy Lifestyles Program

The Healthy Lifestyles Program (formerly known as HELP) is a prevention program based on the *Early Intervention Program* created by the Royal Ottawa Hospital. The goal of the program is to empower students with knowledge, awareness, and the necessary skills to help them cope with factors associated with substance abuse or other related issues and to maximize healthy lifestyle choices.

The program is designed to offer support to students in a number of areas including anger management, family relationships, communication, self-esteem, peer pressure, bullying, and alcohol and drug prevention. In order to maximize each individual's opportunity to learn, program material is presented visually (videos), hands on (exercises, role play, games) and verbally (lectures, discussions).

The Healthy Lifestyles program is offered to students at D'Arcy McGee High School in grade 10, Symmes Jr. High School in grade 7, Philemon Wright High School in grade 9 and Hadley Jr. High School in grade 8. The students, aged 11-17, volunteer to take part in the program through a screening questionnaire and are selected by the facilitator through an interview process. The program is a collaboration with the WQSB and is co-facilitated by a Connexions' facilitator and two Drug and Alcohol Counsellors from the schools.

New to the HLP Program

This year 172 students applied to the program, of which 94 were accepted, and 84 students completed the program (see the attached table with complete statistics). The HLP is still attracting more girls than boys, so this year in an attempt to encourage the participation of boys and to address their particular needs the groups were sorted into all-girls and all-boys groups at both high schools.

New activities were introduced on family dynamics, self-esteem, self-worth, morals and values, and social media. The continuing relationship with l'Autre Chez Soi, the women's shelter, which comes to speak on healthy relationships and the role of social media, also provides students with an important link to a community resource.

The success of the program is also measured by the responses in the student evaluations:

- 83% of students found the information provided by the program to be "helpful", "very helpful", or "extremely helpful."
- 63% of students report being "better" or "much better" at problem solving and decision making.
- 93% of students rated the leadership as "good" or better.

Aware, Prepared and Linked (APL)



The APL program works with youth from the urban core of Gatineau aged 13-17 who are at high-risk for substance abuse and psychosocial issues by giving them the opportunity to identify and manage problems through a work and life skills program. These students are supported by their parents who take part in the *Linked* portion of the program, in order to create better communication and understanding between themselves and their youth. The seven-week program is divided into two parts: four weeks in a classroom setting and three weeks spent at work placements.

The recruiting is done in the area's four English high schools, with additional referrals coming from the Centres Jeunesse de l'Outaouais. In 2015 there were 26 applicants, with a final group composed of 15 students (6 males and 9 females).

The program begins by focussing on work-related skills, including résumé and cover letter writing, mock job interviews and making contact with placement hosts over the phone. In later weeks these skills were expanded on and in addition, themes of communication, stress, anger, budgeting, bullying, family relationships, self-esteem, and goal setting were covered in a way to facilitate group discussion.

Three weeks of the program were dedicated to students attending work placements, where they engaged in hands-on work experiences and gained an opportunity to work on skills such as punctuality, respect for the work place, and following instructions.

Highlights and improvements to the APL program in 2015

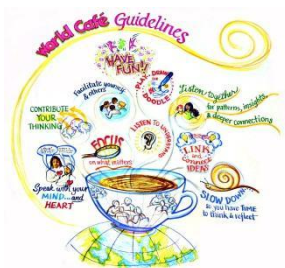
- Three students received job offers at the completion of the program, and two more students were offered volunteer placements.
- The implementation of self-harm as a discussion theme was an important addition, and received positive feedback from both students and parents/guardians.
- A day of volunteer work at the Aylmer Food Bank was added to promote community engagement.

Healthy Lifestyles Kiosk and Workshops

Not only does Connexions collaborate with elementary and high schools, but we have also developed an important partnership with the Hull Adult Education Centre (HAEC) and the Western Quebec Career Centre (WQCC). Due to the work action at the schools we were unable to offer the yearly health and wellness forum in the fall. However, Connexions did offer lunch time kiosks at both HAEC and WQCC on “Safe Partying” and a workshop on nutrition.



New initiative!!!



A World Café ‘Exploring Services for Children with Special Needs’ took place in November 2015 with 20 participants, including parents and staff of the WQSB. The World Café model allowed parents of children with special needs to share their needs and challenges, and to offer possible solutions. Key priorities that parents identified were easy and centralized access to information and services and a parent support group in English. As a result, Connexions has begun to develop a resource tool with the help of a parent volunteer. A seminar was also held on Life Planning for Parents of Children with Special Needs where two guest-speakers spoke about the transition to adulthood and planning for financial security. Connexions will be seeking collaboration from organizations serving this clientele to further this important initiative.

Seniors

Videoconference Sessions

This year we witnessed an increase in participation at many of our CHEP videoconference sessions. Topics such as Stroke and Life after Stroke, Powers of Attorney, Mandates and Wills, and Memory Disorder were of great interest to seniors. These sessions also provided us with the opportunity to strengthen relationships with organizations such as Éducaloi, the Outaouais Alzheimers' Association and Justice de proximité, and to increase access to information and resources in English.

Information sessions

Volunteers with the Papineau Health and Social Services Network (PHSSN) organized an information session in Buckingham on Living with Chronic Pain in April 2015. This yearly event is also collaboration with a local senior's organization, the Centre action générations des aînés. The PHSSN volunteers also supported Connexions to host one its senior focus groups in Buckingham and to distribute the new Health Passport. Thanks to one of our volunteers, Connexions was also able to offer a Jog Your Mind session in conjunction with our senior's focus group in Shawville. Jog Your Mind is a program that promotes the cognitive vitality of seniors who are worried about normal aging-related changes in their memory.



Seniors Focus Groups with Seniors Action Quebec (SAQ)

In collaboration with SAQ, Connexions conducted 5 focus groups throughout the region: Aylmer, Buckingham, Chelsea, Shawville and Low. This activity was part of SAQ's Canadian Heritage project "Building Capacity: From Evidence to Action". Joanne Pocock, Ph.D. researcher, developed socio-demographic portraits for each area and led the focus groups. A total of 104 seniors participated at the focus groups. Priorities identified by seniors in this process were: Access to health programs and services in English; centralized information in English; home support and living arrangements; and, transportation. Connexions will be addressing these priorities in the coming year with stakeholders.

Soutien à l'autonomie des personnes âgées Réseau local des services de Gatineau (SAPA-RLS)



This year the Table SAPA-RLS produced a place mat with a list of organizations serving seniors. Connexions provided translation for the place mats, which are now available to English-speaking seniors. Thanks to one of our volunteers, over 300 place mats, in English and French, have been distributed in the Aylmer sector.



Health Passport

A new tool was produced by Connexions this year. The Health Passport provides helpful anatomical terminology and phrases in French to support English-speakers when visiting the emergency room, clinic or a health professional. The Health Passport App and the Health Passport are available on Connexions website, www.centreconnxions.org, or in paper format. Although the tool was initially designed with seniors in mind seeing as they tend to be less bilingual, it can be useful to anyone seeking health services. A broad dissemination of this tool is planned in 2016 – 2017.

Knowledge development – A community portrait on the English-speaking population in des Collines

This portrait was completed by Connexions and the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), in collaboration with the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux des Collines (CISSS). The main objective of this portrait was to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the English-speaking communities of the des Collines area. These communities are located in Chelsea, Cantley, La Pêche and Val-des-Monts. To do so, different sources of information were gathered from:

1. Reports and other documents (Including a report produced by the former CSSS des Collines in 2011)
2. Key statistics from the 2011 census data
3. Community perspectives, as expressed during community conversations held in these communities in the fall of 2015 and through an on-line survey (completed by 225 respondents)

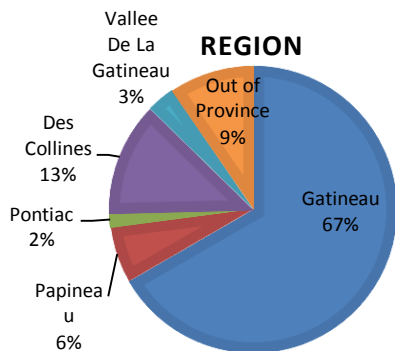
Although access to health and social services was the main theme of the report it also looked at social and community life, education, economic conditions and environment. Key findings of the report are that 79% of respondents state that they have used health and social services in Ottawa, 37% identified as unilingual English-speakers and 75% stated that it was very important to receive information on tests and treatment in English. In 2016 – 2017, Connexions plans to meet with community members and stakeholders to share the results and to explore how this report can best support the community.

Communications / Information and Referral

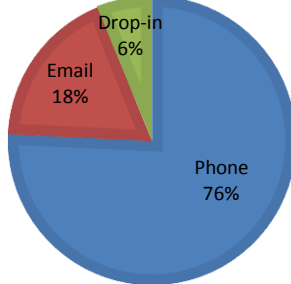
This past year, Connexions continued to reach out to the community via its website, Facebook page, newsletter, newspaper advertisements and e-mail notifications. In addition to providing information on our activities, Connexions also promoted new health services and programs such as the Emergency Pediatric Clinic, Info-social, the 5/30 challenge, to name a few.

Information and referral is an important service offered by Connexions. Inquiries are received from both the English-speaking community and public and community organizations seeking information on a wide range of services and information.

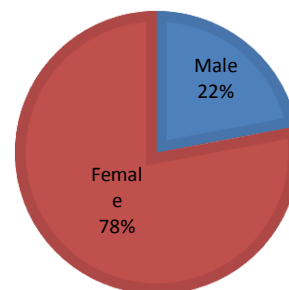
For the year April 1, 2015 to March 30, 2016, Connexions received 66 inquiries related to health and social services. The majority of the inquiries were from the Gatineau region (67%), and were received by telephone (76%). When gender was specified, 78% of the inquiries were from women.



METHOD OF CONTACT



GENDER

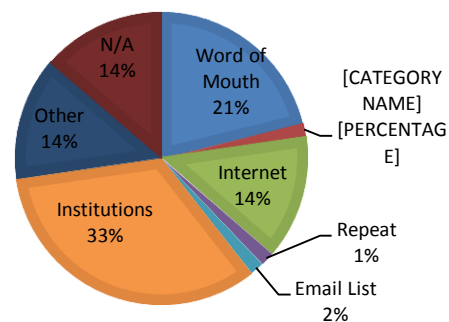


The inquiries were split almost evenly between health-related issues and social services. Health inquiries included requests for information on accessing medical services without a doctor, finding a specialist, and questions regarding RAMQ coverage. Social services inquiries were varied and included requests for information or referral for mental health services, special needs resources, seniors housing questions, parenting classes and emergency financial assistance. Connexions referred 2 seniors with complex issues to the ‘travailleuse du milieu’ of the Centre Action Bénévole de Hull (CABH) which provided an opportunity to form a new partnership.

Approximately one third of inquiries were from clients that had been referred by an institution: The Hull and Gatineau Hospitals refer patients who are looking to have medical documentation translated (which Connexions does not have the mandate to provide); CLSC social workers looking for resources for English-speaking youth; and three calls were referrals from the new 811 line. The Regional association of West Quebecers has also referred clients to Connexions, as have WQSB and CEGEP Heritage staff looking for information and resources for students.

Many find Connexions by word of mouth or internet searches, but some also report finding us in the Aylmer Bulletin or from event advertisements. There was an increase in information requests for children with special needs in March – some mentioning the poster for the event on Life Planning. Others have called before and now know they can call us to get support.

HOW DID THEY HEAR ABOUT US?



The information gathered tells us that access to health and social services and information remains a priority for English-speakers in this area.

Understanding changes to the public health system are especially important to the public, especially in terms of acquiring a family doctor or accessing drop-in clinic services. Referrals from institutions inform Connexions as to where there may be gaps in the public system and where we need to focus our resources and efforts.