



Helping parents be the best they can be

Connections and the families we support had lots to celebrate in 2014. Families were given more chances and more support to be successful, because of a change in policy that increases the focus on keeping families together. For Connections, this success for our families is in contrast to the more difficult environment and processes in PDD, the government department that provides support to adults with developmental disabilities.

At Connections, we celebrated many successes with our families in 2014 — offering new and innovative ideas like digital picture frames to reinforce good parenting practices and more group programs so that families get to know each other and form more natural supports. But we also actively advocated for people whose parenting is unfairly challenged and when they have difficulty accessing the support they need to be successful. We are excited to see progress, but there are still many families in our community who are not getting a fair chance.

Why we do what we do:

Parents with cognitive challenges:

1. Love and care for children like any parents do.
2. Want their children to grow and be happy.
3. Often have skills and are exceptionally resourceful.
4. Want to have choices and a say in the support they receive, and how that support is provided — like any of us would.

Connections helps children grow up in stable, nurturing homes with the parents who love them. The parents Connections supports have cognitive challenges (developmental disability, brain injury, FASD, etc.) It's Connections' **25th anniversary in 2015** and the demand for services continues to grow. Yet, in the past two years, we've seen progress — a provincial shift to provide family supports instead of immediately taking children away. It's getting better for families challenged by disability and poverty. But the families we support, and many families like them, continue to need consistent support that matches their learning style to develop



Connections is a registered charity BN # 890700347RR0001

How you can help...

1. Come to our Sept. 20th **FAMILY DINNER**. Tickets at: connectionsfamilydinner.brownpapertickets.com/
 2. **Donate Walmart or Superstore gift cards, Transit passes or cash** — all extra support for our families.
 3. Sponsor our **Groups Program** (Christmas party, play groups, potlucks, healthy relationships counselling group, and more.)
- CONTACT:**
erinw@connections counselling.ab.ca



"The way you help heal the world is you start with your own family."

Mother Teresa

What makes Connections' support different

Connections has an In-Home team of specialists in disability, parenting and, most important, in putting the family first. A team of 12 visits families in their home, once or twice per week. It's amazing what this team accomplishes! Everything they do, they start by focusing on the parents' strengths. From there, the family and In-Home team member work together to determine the goals and find and get the resources needed to help the family manage and meet the children's needs.

Support for the whole family...

Connections adds to In-Home support with a wide array of family activities and workshops, plus counselling for the parent or other family member. Why is Connections different? We base our work on the research, but our In-Home team responds to the parent and the family where they are and with what they need that will work for them. Most important, we don't have defined timelines: families stay involved with Connections for as long as they need and want us involved. A parent said to her In-Home team member: *"No one has ever asked me what I want before."*

Because of Connections, families are stronger and our Calgary community is strengthened right along with them.

How we support our families:

- ◆ The Alberta Government refers families and pays for a portion of their services
- ◆ United Way of Calgary, The Calgary Foundation and other donors help us support additional families.

A busy and successful 2014

- ◆ **109 families** (347 individuals) supported in 2014, up 20% from 2013 and 195% since 2010
- ◆ **73 active families** at year-end (typically manage +/- 80 families)
- ◆ **32 families** were able to have child intervention files closed
- ◆ **9 families on our waiting list at year end**, most with no source of funding
- ◆ Connections 2014 budget was **\$658,518**. (About \$6,000 per family per year, which compares to \$27,000 per family when children are taken and put into foster care.
- ◆ 81% of budget is salaries; 85% of salaries are front-line team
- ◆ In 2014, we completed a **new website**, and added extensively to our family group programming.

For full 2014 Financial Statements, see our website:
www.connections-counselling.ab.ca



Connections Counselling and Consulting Foundation

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