



centre FOR  
autism  
services  
ALBERTA

# 2012-2013 annual general report

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## message from the president

The Centre's staff and board work closely together to ensure that a rich diversity of programming is delivered to families who access our services.

The Centre has proudly earned a reputation for delivering innovative services through our focus on continuous improvement of programming, participation in leading edge research, use of new technologies and evaluation of frequent feedback collected from stakeholders. Our exceptional team's ongoing commitment to deliver quality services is reflected by our status as the only ASD service provider in Alberta to achieve CARF accreditation, an international standard of excellence.

Our continuing commitment to ensure the Centre delivers the highest quality of services includes charting our future path. Our recently approved five-year Strategic Plan (2013-2018) includes a revised vision, mission and values to reflect our lifespan approach as we move forward. Our major area of planned growth is programming for youth and adults with ASD, an often underserved population. In the past year, we offered several new programs and we intend to continue to grow this area. Current initiatives focus on building relational skills and providing opportunities for social and physical activities. We are actively exploring ways to deliver services across the lifespan. As usual, our approach to program development and implementation will optimize stakeholder engagement. As this initiative progresses, we will continue to keep you informed.

As well, we expanded our efforts to actively engage with community members because we appreciate that the entire community is impacted by autism. We were able to offer more workshops to educators as well as to any interested individual in the community. We recognize that the community is interested in this outreach and we will continue to expand these efforts.

The Centre also actively engages with volunteers, including our U of A student group, and appreciates our strong community support.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve you and my appreciation for the support of my fellow board members during this very eventful year.

*Sincerely,  
John M. Schiel*



## message from the executive director

It was another very busy year at the Centre. We set a new record for our organization as we provided programming services to 724 individuals (540 unique individuals) impacted by autism; more than double the people we served the previous year. Our ability to serve more people came as a result of expanding teen and young adult services, which was financially supported through an Autism Speaks grant, our U of A student volunteer group and Sinneave Family Foundation. Programming services provided by the Centre included: services for children, community and family support, teen and young adult services and services for professionals.

As well, in the past fiscal year we continued our outreach support to schools and community by delivering even more workshops and by adding a second level of training to address complex behavioural supports for the classroom. In response to parent feedback our community programming was also expanded by increasing onsite respite services, developing a half day summer preschool camp program, offering a teen culinary summer camp and extending summer camp by two weeks. We also added a soccer program for children 7 – 12 years of age.

Generous community support enabled us to fund these new initiatives. We were fortunate to have a full year of sponsorship from Calgary-based Knifewear Inc., Gateway Rotary developed a three-year sponsorship with us and President's Choice Children's Charity agreed to yet another

year of financial support for our children's recreational programs. We also received funding support through a casino, the Oilers Foundation's 50/50 event and a private individual continued to help fund our cooking programs. Thank you to all of the 65 volunteers who helped at our casino and the Oilers event. As well, thank you to our U of A volunteer group for their fundraisers and to everyone else who contributed to the Centre over the past year. Whether support is in the form of an individual donation, corporate donation or through the gift of time, it is the culminated efforts of all that enables the Centre to reach more families and individuals impacted by autism each year.

Of course we would not be able to implement all of these programs without the Centre's dedicated, committed and supportive team of staff, volunteers and board of directors. They are truly a remarkable group of individuals and I am proud to serve as their Executive Director.

*Deborah Allard Usunier*  
Executive Director



## strategic plan, including new vision, mission and values

The Centre for Autism Services Alberta 2013-2018 Strategic Plan includes a revamped vision, mission and values to reflect a lifespan approach. We now offer more programs to youth and young adults and need to reflect that in our planning. The Centre is proud to offer programs for infants through to young adults.

## strategic plan: 2013-2018

**vision:** Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder reach their full potential.

**mission:** Our mission is to provide comprehensive and innovative supports and services to those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder.

### core values

*Core values provide criteria by which to assess critical decisions.*

- We value access to supports, services and resources across the full autism spectrum and lifespan
- We embrace person-centered and family-centered practices
- We value meaningful participation of all individuals in every aspect of society
- We believe in the right to individual choice and self-determination
- We value collaboration with all stakeholders
- We are dedicated to continuous quality improvement
- We value accountability and transparency
- We engage in open and honest communication

### key directions

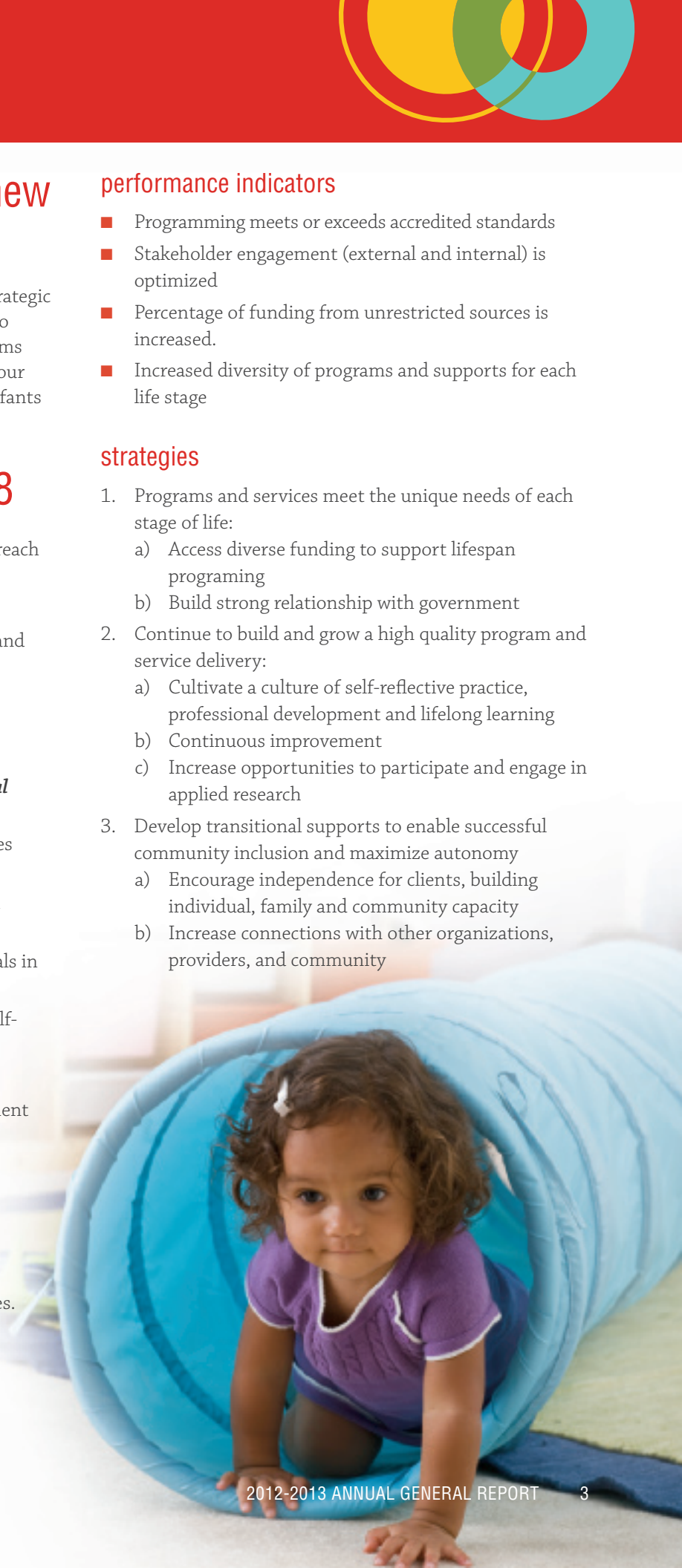
1. Deliver services across the lifespan.
2. a) Continue building quality programs and services.  
b) Continue to attract and retain quality staff.
3. Build an operational model that supports self-determination and independence.

### performance indicators

- Programming meets or exceeds accredited standards
- Stakeholder engagement (external and internal) is optimized
- Percentage of funding from unrestricted sources is increased.
- Increased diversity of programs and supports for each life stage

### strategies

1. Programs and services meet the unique needs of each stage of life:
  - a) Access diverse funding to support lifespan programing
  - b) Build strong relationship with government
2. Continue to build and grow a high quality program and service delivery:
  - a) Cultivate a culture of self-reflective practice, professional development and lifelong learning
  - b) Continuous improvement
  - c) Increase opportunities to participate and engage in applied research
3. Develop transitional supports to enable successful community inclusion and maximize autonomy
  - a) Encourage independence for clients, building individual, family and community capacity
  - b) Increase connections with other organizations, providers, and community





## accomplishments

### expansion of summer programming

In response to family requests, we provided more opportunities for children. We extended camp by two weeks so that it spanned 8 weeks and we increased the number of weekly spaces to accommodate more participants. This enabled us to have 144 campers participate, a significant increase from a capacity of 90 in previous years. Camp continued to be very popular with all spaces filled in early May.

In another effort to meet parents' requests, we added a ½ day camp for preschoolers that ran for two weeks and an offsite teen culinary camp. With these two new offerings we had a total of 166 campers. This was no easy feat; we diligently planned for this increase a year in advance and worked hard on gaining community support to enable this growth. While both the preschool and teen culinary camp expenses were supported through full parent payment, the Centre subsidizes our mainstream camp to families by almost 50%.

### number of individuals reached

The Centre's new mandate to provide programs and services to those affected by autism across the lifespan resulted in new opportunities for program development and enabled us to reach far more individuals. We served a record **724** individuals (540 unique individuals) impacted by autism. This is a significant increase from the previous fiscal year where our number totaled 234 families.

The increase stemmed from our expansion of services to teens and young adults as well as 18 workshops that were offered to families, members and community groups. The Centre's educator workshops drew participants from 40 schools across 5 districts. In the last fiscal year, the Centre's full day training to professionals included *Introduction to Autism* and expanded to offer, *Next Steps*, a more advanced level of full day training. Customized workshops were also delivered to staff at 5 schools. The Centre also expanded its services by delivering presentations to children about autism.

### teen and young adult programming

The Centre continued to look at quality of life issues that impact both teens and young adults with ASD. We targeted several key areas of need: socialization, physical fitness and mobility, which included the ability to get around the city independently or with support. Our programs were designed to teach or encourage social opportunities and social skill building.

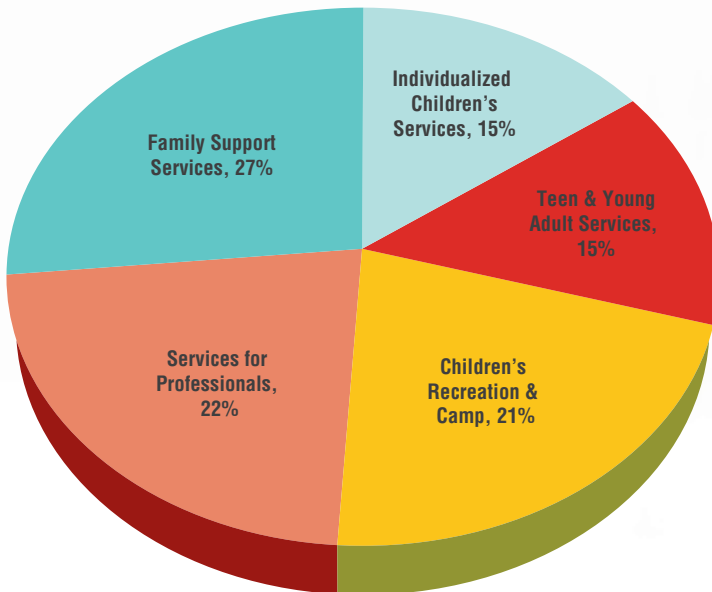
In May we launched four new programs: New Riders and Supported Riders in partnership with Edmonton Transit Services and two physical activity groups, Walking Club and Get Active. Program development was funded through a grant from Autism Speaks Canada. These programs were delivered to 54 individuals over the summer. These programs remain active in the new current fiscal year.





## programming and services

### programming & services participants



The following lists highlight the Centre's diverse programming and recreational supports to individuals impacted by autism and their families.

### services for families

In the past year, a total of 193 families participated in the following programs:

- Family Night
- Parent workshops
- Little ACES
- Valley Zoo
- Centre-based Respite

### recreation and camp programming

156 children participated in the following programs:

- Camp ACE (5 -12 years)
- Little ACES (preschoolers)
- Community recreational programs (cooking, skating, art, soccer & more)

### services for professionals

162 individuals received services in the following area:

- Educator workshops
- In-services for community professionals
- Pivotal Response Training for community professionals
- Picture Exchange Communication System training
- Children's Presentations (autism information)

### teen & young adult services

The Centre expanded its programming to teens and young adults and will continue to grow this area. 106 teens and young adults participated in the following programs:

- Teen Social Night
- Walking Club
- Active for Life
- Teen Culinary Camp – pilot
- Teen Summer Camp (2 weeks)
- Let's Ride New Riders
- Let's Ride Supported Riders
- PEERS (Program for the Evaluation and Enrichment of Relational Skills)

### individualized services for children

107 children and their families received contracted government funded services through Specialized Services and/or Program Unit Funding (PUF). Government contract start and end dates result in a steady flow of intake and discharge of families.



## stakeholder engagement

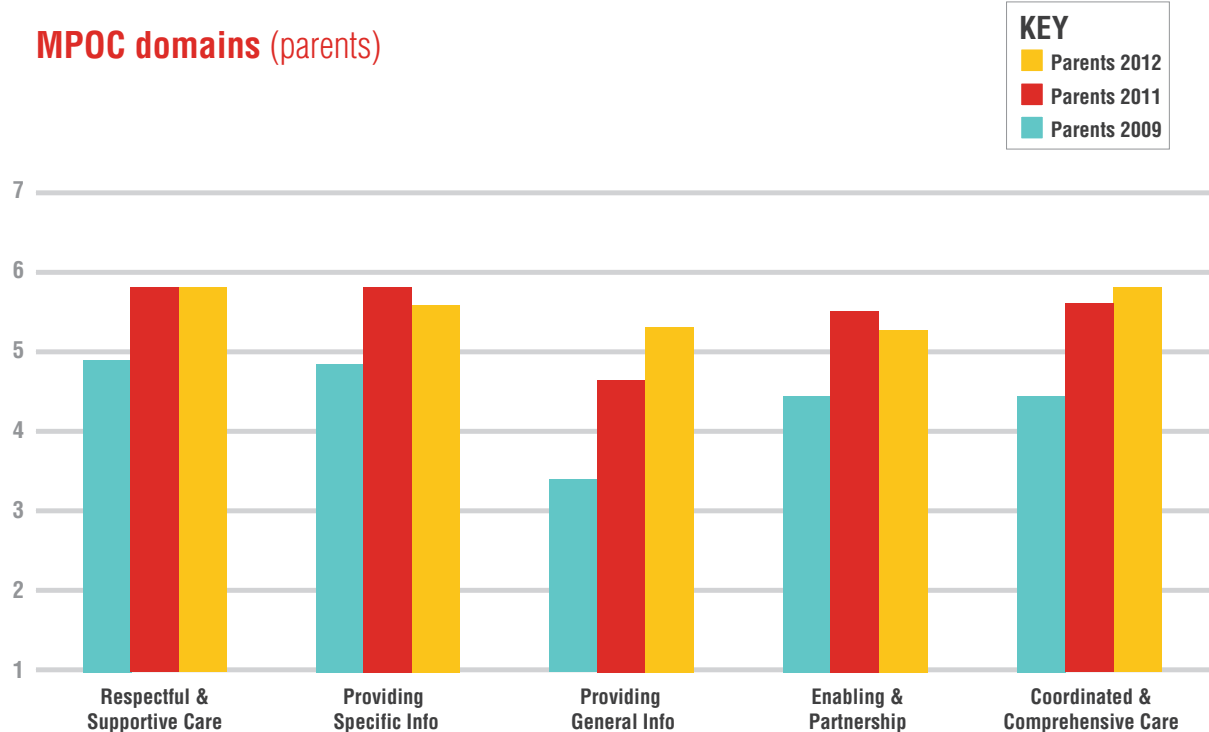
Throughout the year, the Centre gathers information from families about services and programming. The collected information is used to make informed decisions around programs and service delivery. Three surveys were delivered over the course of the last fiscal year: the Measure of Processes of Care, FSCD Six Month Family Outcomes Survey and a school survey.

### measure of processes of care (MPOC)

The Centre uses the Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC) as part of our program evaluation. The MPOC is a standardized questionnaire designed to evaluate family centered care from the perspectives of families and staff. Scores are based on a 7 point scale: 1 meaning – ‘not at all’; and 7 meaning – ‘to a very great extent.’ The chart below provides a comparison of how we are doing on delivering family centered practices from 2009 to 2012.

### domain scores

#### MPOC domains (parents)







### FSCD six-month family survey

As part of our contractual obligations with our funder, Family Supports for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), Centre staff conduct outcomes interviews with our specialized services families at the six-month mark of their contract year. The outcomes identified and adapted for use by FSCD, were taken from work on family and child outcomes developed by the Early Childhood Outcomes Center. Within the semi-structured interview parents are asked to rate their experiences on a 7 point scale on 12 items. Lower scores are generally indicative of areas of need while higher scores are indicative of areas of strength. Despite limitations, the questionnaire provides a great deal of information from our families concerning the services we provide to them. The Centre has been conducting these interviews with families since November 2010.

In examining the compiled data that was collected between September 2012 and August 2013, the following item averaged the highest rating by families (on a scale of 1-7 with 7 being the highest rating):

- How comfortable are you in contributing your thoughts and ideas at meetings with professionals in order to make decisions that matter to you?  
Average of all families' responses – **6.31**


For many children, a core deficit of autism is social interaction. It is not unexpected that the following question 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. This is a growth area for the Centre.

- To what extent does your child engage in positive social relationships?  
Average of all families' responses – **3.52**

Recognizing parents as the longest lasting supports in their child's life, the Centre works closely with families with the intention of ensuring that they have the skills to effectively interact with and support their child.

- How much does your family know about how to help your child develop and learn?  
Average of all families' responses – **4.61**  
**87%** of families reported a score of 4 or higher
- Do you feel like your family has the skills to help your child participate in family routines and activities?  
Average of all families' responses – **4.53**  
**72.5%** of families reported a score of 4 or higher





Many parents at the Centre identify increasing community involvement as being a family priority. The following question from the FSCD interview addresses this:

- Do you feel that you have the knowledge and skills to connect with programs and services in your community that benefit your family?

Average of all families' response – **4.18**

**67.7%** of families reported a score of 4 or higher

We recognize this is an area for growth. The Centre has taken steps to improve in this area. Specific initiatives we have taken with respect to this are:

- Continuing and expanding Family Night
- Starting a parent run preschool group to enable parents and children to connect with each other
- Addressing the need to connect and participate in communities through our service plans
- Expanding our Community Recreation Programs
- Offering workshops specific to building community connections
- Offering workshops where parents not only learn about specific topics but also use the time as a way to learn and connect with other parents.

### **school survey results**

The Centre realizes the vital role of school staff who work with children and families impacted by autism. Schools received surveys from the Centre so that we could gather information regarding the contact between educators and Centre staff. Families were asked to give the surveys to their child/ren's educational staff to ensure transparency and informed consent.

We sought feedback from the schools our children attend to see if we are achieving our goal of having positive relationships with third parties involved in supporting those with ASD. Of the school surveys that we received, 76.5% report being satisfied or extremely satisfied with their relationship with the Centre. In the past year the Centre achieved 100% level of contact with schools our children attend.



## volunteers

The Centre has been most fortunate to have a large number of committed and caring volunteers who help in a variety of roles including summer camps, recreational community groups, therapeutic groups, administration and annual events. This past year 7,371 hours were dedicated to the Centre by more than 60 volunteers, the majority were post-secondary students.

The Centre's University of Alberta Student Association continued to make a strong contribution. They are an official U of A club and work actively on campus on behalf of the Centre. Their fundraising activities included barbeques, bake sales, samosa sales, and bottle drives. These activities supported a new program, Teen Social Night. A key contribution is the advocacy work that is done at the U of A during Autism Awareness Week in early April. Activities included manning a booth in HUB Mall and making a number of class presentations on campus.

## 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 they are not funded by government.

In the 2012-2013 fiscal year our supporters list included:

AGLC – Government of Alberta  
AARDA (Alberta Automotive Recyclers & Dismantlers Association)  
Autism Speaks Canada  
Car Heaven (Automotive Recyclers of Canada)  
Centre for Autism Services Alberta Students' Association  
Charlene Wong  
City of Edmonton  
Edmonton Oilers Foundation  
Gateway Rotary Club  
HDF Insurance  
Hub International Barton Insurance Brokers  
Knifewear Inc.  
Lloyd Sadd Insurance Brokers Ltd. (employees and management)  
Park Paving Ltd.  
President's Choice Children's Charity  
Private donor who has supported cooking classes for the past 6 years  
Sinneave Family Foundation  
TechSoup Canada

Ways other people and organizations gave: designated giving through United Way, Wear Jeans to Work fundraising activity by Grant Thornton employees, camp fee donations and Canada Helps online donations via our website





4752 – 99 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5H5  
phone: 780-488-6600  
e-mail: [info@centreforautism.ab.ca](mailto:info@centreforautism.ab.ca)  
website: [www.centreforautism.ab.ca](http://www.centreforautism.ab.ca)



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