



CENTRE FOR ACCESS TO SERVICES IN ENGLISH
CENTRE D'ACCÈS POUR SERVICES EN ANGLAIS
CASEMCQ.COM

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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Autism – It takes a village!

**Free inclusive conference offers essential information to empower
English-speaking families with children diagnosed autistic**

March 23, 2024, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Église multifonctionnelle de Bécancour
3025 Av. Nicolas Perrot, Bécancour, QC G9H 3B8

For more information and to register online:

<https://www.casemcq.com/autism-it-takes-a-village>

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February 26, 2024. Over the past two decades, awareness about autism has made enormous strides. However, access to autism services, specialist care and resources continue to be challenges, especially for Quebec parents, guardians and children who are predominantly English speaking.

This is why the **Centre for Access to Services in English (CASE), in partnership with the Users' Committee for Autism Services of CIUSSS-MCQ (Comité des usagers du Di-TSA)**, has organized a very special and free afternoon conference supporting the autism community of English-speaking Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec. **"Autism- It takes a village!", aims to clarify what parents and guardians need to do to ensure that their child acquires services, support and resources.**

"It's very clear that once parents get that diagnosis, they're often left perplexed about what to do next. They also aren't adequately informed about what their child and family are entitled to, about their rights," says Julia Frid, CASE's Networking and Partnership Coordinator who

spearheaded the event. “There are multiple systems to understand and navigate, with health and social services and the education sector being the two big ones. And there are local services that parents may not be aware of. Parents tell us that they feel like they are running in circles blind, and that is very concerning. That’s why we organized this in-person conference.”

The conference is framed by the **10 essential steps to take once a child has received a formal diagnosis**. This is a checklist put together by the non-profit Agape Association, which is further being developed by CASE as a brochure with key contacts and resources. Integral to this is **users’ rights**. Autistics – and by extension their families – have rights to services, including services in English. A member of the **Users’ Committee for autism services for CIUSSS-MCQ will speak to users’ rights in detail**. Other professionals from health and social services, the education sector, and organizations dedicated to improving the lives of autistics, will also speak and be on site to answer questions and to provide additional resources.

Who can attend?

While much of this conference speaks to parents and guardians of autistic children, it also speaks to extended family members and friends who are often on the front line of support. Educators, local community organizations, and community leaders are also encouraged to attend.

The conference will be in English, but staff and presenters speak French and members of the French-speaking autism community are welcome to participate.

A truly inclusive event, not just an information session

Children are welcome at the conference, whether neurodivergent or neurotypical. Children and their families are at the heart of this event. Organizers have put together **a special respite and recreation area** that will be staffed by qualified personnel for any children who need a bit of a break from all the grownup talk.

“We want this to be an opportunity for families to meet in person and truly connect. Autism can be very isolating in a region as vast as the MCQ and, as English speakers, even more so,” says Frid. “That isolation needs to be broken and a sense of belonging and community support is vital. We invite all members of the community to attend. This includes the French community. We are all part of the same autism community and the greater community of the MCQ.”

Light refreshments will be served.

Autism – It takes a village! Is made possible by financial contributions from Health Canada through the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN).

About the Centre for Access to Services in English

The Centre for Access to Services in English provides support and resources to facilitate and promote the well-being of the English-speaking population of the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec regions of Québec, Canada. We also help to build bridges with the wider community. Our health, education, and wellness programs aim to build community through engaging workshops and family activities for all ages. For more information, please visit our website at <https://www.casemcq.com> or our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/casemcq>.



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