The Family Engagement In Research (FER) Course

Alberta Cohort - Winter 2025

Bringing together researchers, clinicians, and people with lived-experience related to neurodevelopmental conditions

Presented by:
CanChild,
McMaster University

Sponsored by:

The Azrieli Accelerator
at the University of Calgary
In collaboration with the One Child Every Child initiative

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN RESEARCH
TRAINING PROGRAM

CanChild

McMaster University

Azrieli Accelerator

one child every child

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The FER Course

The Family Engagement in Research (FER) Course is a 10-week online course designed for researchers (graduate students, research coordinators, investigators), people with lived experience and their families who are **interested in partnering in research related to neurodevelopmental conditions**.

The course covers principles of FER alongside discussions of the practicalities and challenges of research partnership. Course instructors strive to create a safe space to trial and express ideas and practical methods to help learners develop competency and confidence in the theory and practice of FER.

The FER Course was developed in 2018 by Andrea Cross, Connie Putterman, Donna Thomson, Dayle McCauley, Patty Solomon, and Jan Willem Gorter at CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research at McMaster University. Course development was funded by Kids Brain Health Network (KBHN).

Objectives

- Define and describe the benefits of family engagement in research.
- Identify family/research partners and understand how to engage individuals with lived experience throughout each step of the research process.
- Discuss roles and responsibilities of researchers and individuals with lived experience.
- Understand the ethics surrounding FER & the rights and responsibilities of research 'participants' versus research 'partners'.
- Recognize barriers and facilitators to FER and identify strategies to support FER at individual and team levels.
- Understand and utilize tools and resources for the implementation and evaluation of FER.
- Communicate ideas related to family engagement verbally and in writing.

FER Learning Platform 🔍

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Email enquiries to fer@mcmaster.ca

Before the Course

We strongly encourage all learners to complete the PORCCH modules prior to taking the FER Course. These modules will provide foundational knowledge and skills about the **research process** (Research 101 Part 1 and 2) and **patient-oriented research** (Patient Engagement 101 Part 1 and 2), and **ethics.**

If you are new to research, we recommend completing all 5 of the PORCCH modules. If you are new to patient-oriented research, but familiar with the research process, you may consider taking only the engagement modules.

OCHSU ONTARIO CHILD HEALTH SUPPORT UNIT

PORCCH

Alberta Course Info

Who is this Course for?

This cohort of the FER Course is intended for people with lived/living experience or their family members or caregivers, academic researchers or clinicians in Alberta who want to strengthen their skills for partnering in research related to neurodevelopmental conditions.

Course Dates

Winter 2025 Cohort:
February 3 - April 11

Course Fee

The $800 course fee for this Alberta Cohort of the FER Course is waived for accepted applicants thanks to the sponsorship of the Azrieli Accelerator at the University of Calgary.

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Course Expectations

When participating in the FER Course, you will be expected to:

- **Review weekly course content.** This includes readings, resources, and video content. All materials are provided through the [FER learning platform](#).

- **Attend 4 two-hour Zoom meetings in weeks 1, 4, 6, and 10.** You will be expected to attend all sessions, with exception for unforeseen circumstances. Multiple missed online sessions may result in withdrawal from the course and/or not receiving the micro-credential.

- **Work collaboratively with a group assigned by the course instructors in the first week of the course.** A large component of this course includes group work. The purpose of group work is to practice working collaboratively in a team that includes researchers, people with lived experience, and family partners.

- **Meet with your assigned group for 30-60 minutes outside of class time each week.** You will be responsible for communicating with your group to find a time to meet.

- **Develop a resource about family engagement in research with your assigned group.** You will share your groups' process of working together in a PowerPoint presentation given by your group in Week 10. You can check out past student projects [here.](#)

Course Schedule

	Winter 2025 Dates	Description
1*	February 3 - 7	What do we mean by family engagement in research?
2	February 10-14	Why is family engagement in research important?
3	February 17-21	Building an integrated research team: How can we find each other?
4*	February 24-28	Building an integrated research team: How can we work together?
5	March 3-7	Roles and responsibilities of families and researchers
6*	March 10-14	Ethics of family engagement in research
7	March 17-21	Barriers and facilitators to family engagement
8	March 24-28	Evaluation of family engagement activities
9	March 31-April 4	Family Engagement tools & resources
10*	April 7-11	Building a community for partnership

*Online session this week. Choice of attending Tues 12-2pm OR Wed 6-8pm Mountain Time.

Course Completion

Upon successful completion of the course (i.e., attending all 4 Zoom sessions, participating in weekly group meetings, group project and presentation), you will receive a McMaster University certified microcredential. This is a digitally shareable credential that is emailed to you. You can add it to your resume, LinkedIn profile, and easily share with current or prospective employers.

After the Course

As a graduate of the FER Course, you become part of the **FER Community**. This growing community of individuals with lived experience, families, and researchers has access to a variety of continued learning, mentorship, and networking opportunities. The community is led by FER Knowledge Broker, Rae Martens. **There are many ways to engage with the FER Community:**

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@youth_in_research

FER Course Fellows

@ferprogram

Sign up for the FER Newsletter

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Graduate Testimonials

"…I was inspired to participate in this course as the parent of a neurodivergent child. Through this course, I have made connections that have enabled my child to participate and partner in research as a family researcher. For us to see ourselves as researchers reframes our experiences and helps us to see ourselves as part of the process of understanding and supporting my child's educational and developmental journey." **- Participant with Living-Experience from the Winter 2023 Calgary Cohort**

"…Moving our research to optimal impact invites us to think deeply and intentionally about the users of the research and specifically who can benefit from it, and how can we ensure more impactful, inclusive research. To that end, the course was terrific… I learned much, and made wonderful connections with family members and researchers alike."
- Researcher Participant from the Winter 2023 Calgary Cohort

© Cross, A., Putterman, C., Thomson, D., McCauley D., Solomon, P., Gorter, JW. (2023). Family Engagement in Research Course. CanChild, McMaster University. Hamilton, Ontario.

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