



Passion + Work = Making a Difference!

Annual Report 2012 - 2013



Mission Statement

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, on behalf of the Catholic community is committed to providing social services that protect children and strengthen family life.

We value

Human Dignity
The Courage and Integrity to Take a Stand
Partnership and Teamwork
Cultural, Racial and Individual Differences
Professional Excellence

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Message from the President and Executive Director

This year's annual report theme is particularly apt as the Society concludes a year of many changes and we embark upon another that promises more. A combination of passion and hard work ensures we are able to make a difference in the lives of the children and families we serve in the face of sector-wide and institutional challenges.

The child welfare sector has navigated through a very difficult budget situation and faces a challenging future. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services approved a new funding model that will significantly impact our budget next year, reducing our overall funding. To support implementation, the Ministry covered the historical debt for the sector, allowing CCAS to finish the fiscal year with a small surplus.

As child welfare shifts to place more emphasis on family-based care and permanence for children, we are continuing to implement permanency strategies which include realigning our service and kinship departments to better support the service objectives. Our overarching goal is to help children and youth who are currently in the community or in care find permanent relationships and homes within their extended families and kin.

New initiatives such as our conferencing model were designed to more fully engage families in decision making about the safety and well being of children. More children who are in the care of the Society are placed in family type residential settings. CCAS has been preparing for the arrival of CPIN (Child Protection Information Network), a province-wide data system that will allow all CAS's in Ontario to more effectively share information on child protection cases and will support system management. CCAS will be one of the early adopters of this new system, which is scheduled to officially launch in 2014. Many of our staff have been and will be involved in the development, roll-out and project implementation. This new system will transform the sector and increase its capacity to serve children and families.

CCAS was honoured once again as one of Canada's Top Family Friendly Employers and one of Canada's top 100 Employers.

The Society completed another successful annual Crown Ward and Foster Care Licensing Review. In recent years, the Ministry has combined these important accountability mechanisms that help us assess and monitor the well-being of our children and youth, and support our foster parents. This year almost 300 children and youth had their files reviewed and had the opportunity to provide comments on services.

Much work was completed this year on the design and implementation plan for the new Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) in Toronto which is due to open in July of 2013. CCAS is a service partner in this important venture which will co-locate police, child protection staff and other services to improve service to clients and support children who are the subject of abuse investigations.

As Catholic Charities celebrates its 100th Anniversary we extend a special thank you to that organization for its support of our community and its most vulnerable throughout the years.

And to our staff, it is because of your passion, your hard work and your professionalism that we are able to protect children and help so many families in our community.

Stephen Taylor

Stephen Taylor
President

Mary A. McConville

Mary A. McConville, M.S.W., R.S.W
Executive Director

Soul Journey

Six CCAS youth were invited to accompany other youth and Child Protection Workers from the Children's Aid Society of Toronto on an inspirational Black Heritage trip to New York City. *Soul Journey* was designed to stir, challenge, and change from within.

Our youth visited historical sites, relics and monuments dedicated to great people who lead the human rights struggle. Youth heard spirited narratives; stories of love, sacrifice, selflessness, resilience, forgiveness; perseverance, faith, hope, and courage about the African slaves.



Youth Funding

Earlier this year the Minister of Children and Youth Services announced that children and youth in the care of Children's Aid Societies would receive additional funding for education. This funding is slated to help youth complete high school, attend post-secondary school and lower living expenses. This additional support will alleviate some of the financial burdens that our children and youth in the community face while trying to juggle school and living independently.

Passionate About Helping Others: One CCAS Youth Strives to Make a Difference

"I think we are all here on this earth to give something back."

Sheldon came into the care of CCAS when he was just six years-old. Today, he is an intelligent and diligent young man with a bright future and he is on a mission to help children and youth. "I am passionate about helping people," says Sheldon. "Although I grew up in the child welfare system, I was fortunate to get the help I needed. I want to give back and help people who are having difficulty."

This year Sheldon was the recipient of CCAS's Hope for Children Fund Scholarship and has been pursuing a diploma at Sheridan College in Child and Youth Work. He loves every moment of it. "The program focuses on helping you to understand people, build people up and contribute to their growth," says Sheldon. "What else could you want in life?"

Sheldon has put his words into action, recently taking on a part-time position at the YMCA where he will work as a child and youth worker, mentoring others. In addition, Sheldon was selected from among his peers for a short-term placement at the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. He will also be a part of a Youth Advisory Committee at CCAS, which is expected to commence later this spring. Sheldon, along with another former Crown Ward, Gerald, will be working together to develop programs and provide advice and guidance to other CCAS youth. Sheldon spends his spare time reading, practicing yoga and meditating. He hopes to major in psychology at the University of Toronto when he completes his Child and Youth Worker diploma.

Staff Support Youth Striving to Fulfill Their Dreams

“When I was younger, I was uncertain about my future. My dreams were just what they were – far distant dreams. When they finally turned to reality, it was simply amazing.”

It was passion that brought together a handful of CCAS staff members to form the Nelson Mandela Scholarship fund. “We really wanted to do something positive for the community. We believe that education is a way out of poverty and can provide hope for the future,” says Elaine Forrester, Child Protection Supervisor.

Since 1994, the Nelson Mandela Scholarship fund has been providing youth of African heritage with financial assistance to pursue post-secondary education or training through the Hope for Children Fund’s Scholarship Program. CCAS employees have organized events to raise money for this fund since its inception. Last year, the Fund awarded scholarships to three students.

Many of the scholarship recipients have gone on to accomplish great things. Preston received the scholarship in 2005 while pursuing his diploma in graphic design at Sheridan College. He went on to start his own successful freelance graphic design business. Today, he happily juggles the demands of being employed as a graphic artist and owning his own business.

“When I found out that I would be receiving the scholarship, it meant the world to me,” says Preston. “It gave me the opportunity to achieve my hopes and dreams. It helped me attain a post-secondary education, and also gave me the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.”

If you would like to make a donation to the Nelson Mandela Scholarship Fund, visit www.hopeforchildren.ca/donate.

More than 3,000

Families and 139 youth and youth parents experienced a festive Christmas thanks to the generosity of our Christmas Program donors.

105

Current and former Crown wards took the next step in their academic future with help from Hope for Children Fund’s Scholarship Program.



180

Families benefited from the experience of Summer camp through our Summer Camp program.

More than 100

Families received support through Emergency Assistance Grants.



Volunteers Unite Families Through CCAS's Child Access Program

"The goal is to make the families feel safe and not judged. It's a place where parents can bond with their children in a safe way. There's help for them here."

For many of the children, youth and families we serve, weekend access visits are a valuable opportunity to spend time together as a family, to work on parenting skills and to receive help and support. These weekend visits would not be possible without our dedicated volunteers, including our Child Access Program (CAP) volunteers and our volunteer drivers. These people take time out of their weekend to ensure that our families can have these important visits.

Sheri, a CCAS CAP Volunteer Coordinator, knows first-hand how crucial this time is for our clients. She also knows what a fantastic opportunity working for this program can be. "For me, I've grown as a person, I'm more spiritually aware, more culturally sensitive and I understand how different experiences lead to different roads, but ultimately everyone is looking for the same thing – love and acceptance." She encourages others to get involved as volunteers.

Part of Sheri's job with CCAS is to provide the volunteers with assignments and to spend time talking with them about their experiences helping our families. This role allows her to see how important these volunteers are. "Volunteering for the CAP program is a different experience than working in an office," she says. "The goal is to make the families feel safe and not judged. It's a place where parents can bond with their children in a safe way. There's help for them here."

163

Total number of volunteers

65

Families Served by CCAS's Child Access Program



Fostering Education

We expanded our internal education campaign around Foster Family Week in order to bring more awareness and understanding about the important role that our foster families play in supporting the Society's work.



Promoting Permanence

As part of this year's changes within Resource Services we looked at how our resources could enhance areas within the agency, such as Kinship and Adoption, which support the Society's commitment to permanence.

Fostering A Strong Sense of Community

"My home, my heart will be open to you for the rest of my life."

The unexpected passing of Carmel, one of our foster parents, was a tragedy for all at CCAS. But for the children in her care who saw her as their parent whose home they could stay in as long as they needed, it was devastating. The thought that they might need to be split up was equally distressing. The children see each other as siblings, though they aren't all related, and they wanted to stay together.

For Joan and Edmund, CCAS foster parents who lived in the same area, Carmel's passing was a shock, but their first thought was, 'don't split her boys up.' They knew Carmel through fostering and understood how important family was to her – they offered to take the children. CCAS staff thought this would be a wonderful option. The older children (all over 17) were able to move in with friends (they now all live together as roommates), which meant that Joan and Edmond had the space for the three youngest boys.

The couple had to scramble to get enough beds and linens – they even decided to move out of their master bedroom into a finished suite in the basement to better accommodate the needs of the boys – but they were ready when the time came. So far it has proven to be a successful transition, bringing much laughter and life into their home. For Joan, it's especially meaningful because Carmel was someone who always gave so much and never asked for anything – now she sees a way to give back to her friend. "I told the boys at her memorial service, 'today I'm here to help not only Carmel, but also you. My home, my heart will be open to you for the rest of my life.'"

Family Finders

Two Family Finder positions were created within the Society to research and explore the permanent connections that might be available to a child. This supports the work we do in ensuring that children have lifelong supports and connections within their family and community.



Providing Support

We expanded the mandate of our Resource Parent Support workers to assist in enhancing the skills of our foster parents, kin caregivers and our adoptive parents, including offering post kinship/adoption support.

Exploring Family Connections Earlier

“They are so glad to be with their family. It gives them a strong sense of identity.”

When a child comes into the care of the Society, it is important that we look at the situation through their eyes. While our mandate is to keep them safe, we also need to look at what makes sense for them. That means creating lifelong connections, preferably within their own family.

Since 2004, CCAS has had a Kinship Program in place to help more of the children and youth who come into our care find safe, stable homes with family members. This year, we are pleased to have moved forward with introducing an Early Intervention Response. Our new team takes on responsibility for working with kin from the moment the Society becomes aware of this as an option for a child.

Dawn Boucher, a Supervisor for the Kinship Program says, “Children are connected to biological family and to communities. There are people in these communities who are important to them.” Keeping alive those connections gives children a sense of belonging, it provides permanence, stability and improved self-esteem, among many other things.

We still continue to follow stringent Kinship Standards when placing children with kin, including extensive child welfare checks and vulnerable sector screens for everyone over 18 residing in the home. As well, we conduct comprehensive home studies and complete home visits once a month or more once the child is placed.

This new framework, however, looks at how we can find family members who are willing and able to take on a child, but also how we can support them in doing so. It respects that we cannot ask grandparents or aunts and uncles to take on a sibling group and then leave them without the needed resources to do so effectively. Our new Kinship program brings together agency and community supports to truly help build a village to raise those children.

For our workers, this has been an important change. “Kids are doing better in this program,” says Kinship Supervisor Henry Fong, “they are so glad to stay with their family. It gives them a strong sense of identity. And our workers are more inspired than ever before. They will advocate for Kinship placements with such passion because they see how this program works for these children.”

A Twist of Fate: Couple Adopts an Older Youth

“We’ve made this connection to become a family...”

When Jemma and Anthony decided to adopt, they pictured a young child and had settled on the idea of one no older than six. Fate intervened, however, and at the Adoption Resource Exchange (a twice yearly opportunity for agencies across Ontario to show approved adoptive parents children who are available) they saw a video made by 17-year-old Lisa.

Anthony turned to his wife and saw tears streaming down her face as they watched. Lisa wasn’t at all what they were looking for, but Jemma felt a powerful connection. They decided to talk to CCAS about the teen and discovered her amazing story – she had asked to be removed from an abusive home at 14 and she struggled with learning challenges. However, she was determined to find a family to adopt her – despite the fact that older youth adoptions are less common. Lisa knew that her chances for success in life would be much better with a loving family by her side.

Anthony and Jemma considered long and hard the impact that taking in a teenager would have on their lives, but they realized that this resilient young woman was the perfect fit for their family. And since they made that decision Lisa has shown just how right they were – she is a thriving young woman, improving her grades, taking on new challenges like karate classes and church groups, making new friends and proving to be a loving and devoted daughter. There have been struggles along the way as both parents and daughter get used to their new family, but they all express their happiness for the decision they’ve made. “We’ve made this connection to become a family and the only regret we have is that we don’t have even more time with her,” says Anthony. “We wish we’d been there to protect her even earlier.”

Enhancing Service

A review of Adoption Services was conducted with a view to determining how to enhance service and increase adoption options for Crown wards. This review resulted in approval for two additional adoption workers and a social history writer.

Bringing Stories to Life

Lifebooks: More than a Photo Album is a guide which CCAS created to enhance the training of our volunteers and foster parents in how to develop lifebooks that will truly tell the story of our children and youth in care.

38

Adoptions Completed

126

Adoption Disclosures Completed



Service Statistics 2012 - 2013

Referral Source	# of Referrals	% of Referrals
Police	1,245	16.4%
School/Principal/Teacher/ School Social Worker	1,008	13.3%
Other CAS	829	10.9%
CAS Worker/Supervisor/Care Provider	609	8.0%
Social Agency	1,297	17.1%
Birth Parent	455	6.0%
Other	1,003	13.2%
Medical	286	3.8%
Anonymous	184	2.4%
Relative	129	1.7%
Legal/Court/Lawyer	134	1.8%
Neighbour/Friend	88	1.2%
Child/Self	159	2.1%
Daycare	46	0.6%
Unknown	134	1.8%
Agency Total	7,606	100.0%

Children & Families Served

Total Families Served in The Community:
9,895

Children Served in the Community at Protection:
11,433

Children Served in the Community at Non-Protection:
4,022

In Care:
1,344

On Extended Care & Maintenance:
345

Total Days of Children in Care:
359,249

Adoption & Foster Care Services

Adoptions Completed:
38

Adoption Disclosures Completed:
126

Other Disclosure Services:
2,468

CCAS Foster Homes:
133

CCAS Group Homes:
12

Other

Families Served at Investigation:
3,541

Total Investigations Completed:
2,964



CCAS Financial Statement* (in thousands of dollars)

Revenue	Year Ended March 31, 2013	Year Ended March 31, 2012
Province of Ontario	102,404	99,369
Government of Canada	2,631	2,598
Hope for Children Fund	333	285
Other	2,662	3,735
Total	108,030	105,987
Child and Family Services		
Boarding Rate Payments	41,590	40,560
Salaries and Benefits	44,559	44,045
Travel	2,827	2,898
Children's Personal Needs	2,701	3,163
Health and Related Services	1,362	1,341
Purchased Services	1,321	694
Financial Assistance and Special Programs	697	664
Total	95,057	93,365
Administrative Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits	6,927	6,479
Building Occupancy	2,866	2,711
Office Administration and other	2,088	2,301
Technology and Purchased Goods and Services	873	1,126
Training and Recruitment	202	229
Total	12,956	12,846
Total Expenses	108,013	106,211
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses for the year	17	(224)
Accumulated deficit, beginning of year	(748)	(544)
Funding for prior year deficit	224	20
Accumulated deficit, end of year	(507)	(748)

* Full consolidated financial statements, as audited by Ernst and Young LLP, are available from the Society upon request.

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Terry Daly, CHRP

Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto - Head Office

Communications Department

Hope for Children Fund

26 Maitland Street
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1C6
Tel: 416-395-1500
Fax: 416-395-1581

Child Protection Services - East

Resource Services

Child & Youth Services

1880 Birchmount Road
Toronto, Ontario M1P 2J7

Child Protection Services - North West

30 Drewry Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M2M 4C4

Child Protection Services - South

Intake Services

900 Dufferin Street, Suite 219
Toronto, Ontario M6H 4B1