



For The
Love
of Children

Annual Report 2014-2015

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Love
of Children

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What We Value

Human dignity

...

The courage and integrity
to take a stand

...

Partnership and teamwork

...

Cultural, racial, and
individual differences

...

Professional excellence

...

Our 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.

A Message from the *President* and the *Executive Director*

For the Love of Children is more than a catchy tag line for our organization. It is the driving force — the promise — behind the work we do and embodies the way we think, feel, act and serve our children, youth and families.

Over the past year, the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS) managed a tremendous amount of operational and organizational change, including the departure of our beloved former Executive Director, Mary M. McConville. Mary enjoyed an extraordinary 36-year career as a leader and authority in the field of child welfare, including 15 years at the helm of this organization. We thank Mary for her visionary leadership and dedicated service and wish her a happy and rewarding retirement and the blessings of good health, family and friends.



Janice Robinson, Executive Director with Richard Piatti, Board President

Focusing on Best Practices and Balancing the Budget

In this, the second of our three-year Sustainability Plan, CCAS focused its services on three priority directions: *Prevention* - preventing admission into care by providing intensive family supports; *Permanency* - working with extended family members or primary family connections to plan for children and youth as preferred alternatives to foster or group care; and *Preparation for independence* - supporting youth so that they can successfully transition from our care toward secure adulthood.

In order to prevent children from entering foster care, we are offering expedited access to intensive, short-term services to families at risk, by partnering with five key community service providers.

We have expanded our Family Group Conferencing program which brings together extended family members to plan for the safety and well-being of their children. These

sorts of admission prevention strategies have helped lower the number of children in care. In fact, 93% of the children we serve remain in the care of their own family.

The Society has been operating under fiscal constraints with funding reductions of 2% per year beginning in 2013 until 2018. Our Sustainability Plan enabled us to significantly reduce operating costs through a disciplined approach to service delivery, reduced staffing levels through early retirement and other cost reduction measures, finishing the fiscal year with a surplus.

The purpose of this annual report is to illustrate the positive impacts of these priority service directions by highlighting the real-life stories of our families and the involvement of our staff.

The Death of Jeffrey Baldwin: Lessons Learned

In the year since the Coroner's Inquest into the tragic death of Jeffrey Baldwin and the jury's subsequent 104 recommendations, CCAS has implemented the three recommendations which were directed towards the Society. These included adding communication skills to the key qualifications for positions in the agency requiring client contact and collaborating with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' provincial training program on a case study to share the learnings from Jeffrey Baldwin's death and its aftermath.

Since Jeffrey's death, the Society has worked diligently to strengthen its practices and policies to ensure there is never another tragedy like this. We continue to share our lessons learned across the sector and will strengthen practices in our agency, among Children's Aid Societies in Ontario, and support the work of all those in the community who have involvement with our children.

Managing Through Change

We are incredibly proud to be among the first Children's Aid Societies in the province to successfully launch the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) — a province-wide, information system that will eventually link all of Ontario's CASs. Preparing for CPIN was a three-year marathon involving thousands of hours of careful planning, which spanned all areas of the organization.

From the CPIN project team to Information Technology, administrative and front-line workers, we are grateful to our amazing staff who truly went the distance to ensure that we met our launch date and worked tirelessly to ensure a smooth transition of our current systems to the new model.

Committed to Transparency and Accountability

As part of our commitment to accountability and transparency, CCAS actively participated in the development and launch of the new child welfare performance measurement system. CASs are measuring indicators of performance in the areas of child safety, well-being and permanence. As well, our sector is examining organizational capacity and governance effectiveness. These indicators will provide important data to inform the policies and practices of CASs, as well as help influence decision-making related to program development, budgeting and planning. We are committed to developing our own performance measurement and analysis in the coming year.

In conclusion, our ability to deliver on the promise of our special mission — ***For the Love of Children*** — is made possible by the contributions of so many individuals. Our compassionate and professional staff, foster, kin and adoptive parents, volunteers, our Board of Directors, Catholic Charities and our donors dedicate their efforts to make children safer and families stronger. Together we work toward a bright, secure and healthy future for our Catholic community.

Janice Robinson and Richard Piatti

Write ON! Letters from our Service Recipients



Dear CCAS,

"My family and I are deeply grateful for your support during the tough moments we were going through. Two years ago, I came to Canada with my only child who has autism and is high needs.

My husband and I looked for help everywhere trying to get my son into the right program and schooling so he could get the support he needed. After a couple of months, long waiting lists for services, and some incidents that sent my son to hospital and the police, my husband contacted CCAS and our world completely changed.

This group of professionals is so caring and experienced. You found a group home for my son that could better meet his needs. One year later, my son is living in the right place, enrolled in the right school program and receiving all the support he needs. My husband and I have also received training from different organizations in how to handle and support him better.

We are truly grateful for everything that is happening in my son's life and we owe all of this to CCAS. Despite all of our desperation and fear, it's been a great experience to have found these wonderful people.

Everyone has been wonderful, helpful and caring towards us. Thanks Catholic Children's Aid. My family and I will love you forever. May God bless everyone there."

Johanna Gautreaux, CCAS service recipient

Dear CCAS,

"CCAS has provided me with a sense of hope and has helped me feel valued. I am living at your Foundations transition program and learning how to prepare for adult life. My worker is kind, demonstrates respect for me and is funny."

Jason, 16 year-old crown ward

Dear CCAS,

"CCAS provided me with my basic needs and I always felt supported. I had an awesome social worker. I feel that if I hadn't entered into CCAS care, I wouldn't be where I am today. CCAS empowered me to become who I am and taught me my rights as a person."

Karen, 21 year-old former CCAS crown ward who graduated from George Brown College and works as a manager at a McDonald's restaurant

Dear Rose,

I just want to say thank you for everything! You've made a huge difference in our lives, especially mine. You don't know how you've boosted my confidence and helped me grow as a person and a mother. The conversations we had made a difference for me. I can't thank you enough for the help you've given me. Thanks for being a caring and understanding person (not just a worker) and for not treating us like your work. I wish you nothing but success, health, wealth and happiness.

Allison, a former service recipient whose case is now closed





(from left to right)

Cidalia Pereira

*Supervisor, Counselling
Services, Abrigo*

Natalie Torrado

*Child Protection Supervisor
and CCAS Liaison to Abrigo*

Stephanie Amaral

Child Protection Worker



Prevention: Intensive Services Supporting Family Connections

It's said that it "takes a village to raise a child."

An innovative program that partners CCAS with community service agencies is creating a village of care and support to empower families to keep their children out of care and in their homes.

Supporting Family Connections provides "front-of-the-line" access to culturally-sensitive counselling services, mental health and crisis supports to families that have been brought into contact with CCAS because of child protection concerns.

The program is based on a highly successful pilot project launched in 2011 that paired CCAS with the Jamaican Canadian Association and Milan and Associates. Initially developed to address concerns about the over-representation of black children in the Society's care, the pilot proved so successful at preventing children from being brought into care that it was expanded in October, 2014 to include three new partners: Abrigo, New Life Mennonite Centre and Oolagen.

Providing "priority access" to families at a time of crisis is key to the program's success says Charmaine King, a Child Protection Supervisor and one of the program's coordinators. "One of the struggles we face is when families are in crisis and need help, there are long wait times for service. This program provides quick access — usually within two to three weeks. A service provider will come into their home when it is convenient for the family, on evenings or weekends — no need to take time off work."

Families that have been assessed as a good fit for the program are referred to one of the community agencies;

participation is entirely voluntary. An initial meeting takes place whereby the family, CCAS case worker and service provider sit down together to discuss the concerns and plan of care. "The process is completely transparent," says Charmaine. "This helps build trust with families who may be feeling threatened about having their child taken into care."

Over the next few weeks, families have 12 sessions with their service provider to work on the issues they are facing. Whether it's learning anger management techniques,

"Whether it's learning anger management techniques, developing positive parenting strategies or coping with mental illness, the approach is non-judgemental and culturally sensitive."

developing positive parenting strategies or coping with mental illness, the approach is non-judgemental and culturally sensitive. "Families say, 'I don't feel that the person working with me is judging me. I feel that they understand what I am going through with my child from my cultural perspective,'" says Charmaine.

Family Services Workers, Stella Grange and Stephanie Panzarella have found that involving a service provider whose entire focus is to help the family can help reduce any tension that may exist with their CCAS case worker.

Stella remembers working with one woman who was very antagonistic towards her: "When I first made the referral to the community partner, the mother was not even talking to me because she felt threatened when I spoke about my concerns about her child," she says. "Working

with the program, she was able to open up about what she was feeling and what was standing in the way of working with the Society."

Stephanie had a similar experience: "The counsellor made sure the family knew that aside from the CCAS piece, she was there to really focus on them and help resolve their issues."

When the sessions are complete, the service provider prepares a report outlining the progress that has been made, areas of concern, as well as recommendations for further action, which is shared with the family and CCAS case worker. In the vast majority of cases, concerns about the child's safety and well-being are able to be addressed without bringing the child into care.

One of the mothers who participated in the program wrote a letter to Stella to express her gratitude for the care and support she and her family received: "Thank you so much for the warm welcome in our lives and for being part of us as a family. I hope everyone can be like you and the great job you do with families like mine."



Permanence: Family Finders Program



Family Finding provides our children and youth with an opportunity to build lifelong relationships with members of their family. It can also, in the process, create opportunities to identify potential kin placements.

Ever since Sean was a young boy, he has dreamed about meeting his biological father. A crown ward since he was two years old, Sean grew up in a group home with his foster parents and biological brother and had never met his father.

"I remember when Sean went to Disneyworld with

"It's important to connect kids with their original families because we need to know the origins of where we came from – our history and our background." – Sean

"Dreams Take Flight", recalls Elsa De Mejia, Sean's CCAS Protection Worker since he was a crown ward. "When he boarded the plane, he raised his arms in the air and said, 'I bet my dad lives in the United States and he is a famous soccer player!'"

Sean's dream of one day meeting his father continued to grow over the years.

"I started to wonder about my dad when I was 11 years old. When I had the chance to meet him for the first time at age 16, I was really excited and a little nervous," says Sean.

Connecting children and youth in care to their family members is a priority service intervention and the primary focus of CCAS's Family Finders Program.

Family finding is a process that seeks to build permanent, caring relationships and life-long connections

between children and their families. Workers in this program use a variety of methods to search for family members, including: interviews with family members already in contact with our agency, phone calls/cold calling, letters, internet searches, social media and visiting establishments where family members may be located.

"Making these connections requires a certain level of delicacy as some family members have not had contact with the family we are calling about in years and some don't know the children or youth have been in foster care," explains Alicia McLean, Family Finders worker. "Once family

members have been discovered, the goal is to have continued engagement with them. One of the best ways to engage with multiple family members is to hold a Facilitated Family Conference. Sometimes, these meetings bring together family members for the first time ever or for the first time in many years and it's something that may not have occurred if family finding wasn't initiated," she adds.

Through Alicia's work to identify family connections for Sean, she found not only Sean's dad but also his entire side of the family that included his uncles, aunts, nieces and cousins.

"It's important to connect kids with their original families because we need to know the origins of where we came from — our history and our background," says Sean.

Studies have shown that youth leaving care feel isolated

and alone and many of them try to seek out family members on their own once they are discharged from care. Family finding starts this process of learning about their family earlier while they still have the support of their CCAS workers, foster parents, group home staff, and therapists to help them build new relationships, rebuild connections, and understand issues in their family.

"Sean is at an age where he is able to understand the value of family — the value of relationships and the value of maintaining relationships," says Elsa. "Each one of his family members has a different role in his life."

Sean and his father have started to form a relationship over the several meetings they have had together. The initial supervised visit was for them to get to know each other and the visits after that have given them the opportunity to connect and bond over things they have in common.

"I understand my dad — we have similar personalities, similar interests. We both like the same food — our favourite food is tacos. I like football, he likes football, I like basketball, he likes basketball. We both like clothes and fashion," says Sean.

Family Finders helps families find common ground and assists in building family support networks to ensure optimal well-being for our children in care.

"Part of CCAS's mission statement speaks to providing social services that protect children and strengthen family life," says Alicia. "Family finding is a concrete way to encompass our mission and is available to every family that we serve."



CCAS Family Finding Team

(from left to right)

- Alicia McLean**
- Jayzelle Lagman**
- Kristin Baskin**
- Claudio Valdes**
- Sonia Tramontin**

Missing from photo:
Carmen Dan and
Charlotte Akuoko-Barfi





(from left to right)

Dean Hughes

Program Coordinator

Vivian

Foundations Resident

Oddane Taylor

Mentor

Leana Clarke

Program Coordinator



Preparation for Independence: Foundations Program

The road to adulthood is seldom smooth and without a supportive family network, it's easy to take a wrong turn and get lost along the way.

Eighteen-year-old Vivian knows all about the challenges of launching into independence. After living in a loving foster home for four years, she is making the transition to adulthood. But she's not doing it alone. Staff at CCAS's Foundations Program is helping Vivian develop the skills, competencies and connections she needs to put her on the road to success.

The Foundations Program, which launched in February, 2015, offers residential and day programs to youth aged 16 to 20 who are currently in the Society's care, make a smoother transition to adulthood.

Housed in a cozy century home in North Toronto, the residential program can accommodate up to five youths. It's staffed by program coordinators, Leana Clarke and Dean Hughes and live-in mentor, Oddane Taylor. Together, they teach life skills, everything from basic cooking, banking and budgeting to the "softer" skills such as communication and problem-solving.

"Our youth come from environments with lots of rules and structure," explains Leana. "When they leave care at 18, they receive an independent living cheque from the government, but have no idea of how to open a bank account, cash a cheque or manage their lives. This program is a stepping stone, before they move out on their own."

The program's goal is to help youth become confident, self-reliant adults. "Although we are here to support them, we encourage them to do things on their own," says Dean.

There are few rules in the house — no drugs and no alcohol — residents must be going to school or working. Other than that, they set their own schedules and manage their money.

Programming and goal setting is tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of each individual. For example, Vivian's first goal, when she came to the house, was to learn to write a cheque. She sits down with Leana and Dean on a regular basis to update her goals and monitor her progress.

Vivian has her own room and shares a kitchen and living

space with four other youths. During the week, she cooks her own meals and balances her schedule between her grade 12 studies and a part-time babysitting job. She pays \$400 "rent" each month — money which is kept in a trust account for her until she leaves the program.

After a busy week, Vivian looks forward to Sunday when everyone in the house gets together to do chores and prepare and share a meal. "Last Sunday, we were all just blasting music, having a good time making our oxtail," remembers Vivian. "We really had time to bond as a family, it was really cool."

On days when Vivian feels overwhelmed or upset, she turns to live-in mentor, Oddane, with whom she has formed a special relationship. "If I have a problem, I know that he will help me through it. He's been through struggle



and he has the compassion and the lived experience to talk through things — not as a parent, but as a mentor who genuinely wants me to succeed," she says.

"Without this program, I think I would get drawn into unhealthy choices ...

Thank God they put this program into place." – Vivian

Over the next year, Vivian will continue to live in the house and work towards her long-term goal of pursuing post-secondary education. Before she leaves the program, Leana and Dean will ensure that she has a place to live and connect her with a Youth in Transition Worker in the community.

There are no guarantees in life, but the program has provided Vivian with a firm foundation for success. She is hopeful for the future and grateful for the support she continues to receive. "Without this program, I think I would get drawn into unhealthy choices," she says. "I have the type of personality where if I'm surrounded by negativity, I'll immerse myself in it. Thank God they put this program into place."



Through the generosity of its donors, the Hope for Children Fund is able to provide needed supports for vulnerable children, youth and families served by CCAS. Hope for Children funds programs to help ensure the Society is meeting the financial, physical and emotional needs of the community we serve.

These programs include:

- **Post-Secondary Scholarships** for Crown Wards of the Society to realize their academic dreams.
- **Emergency Assistance Grants** for families struggling to pay their rent or buy groceries.
- **Summer Camp** for kids so that they can have a carefree experience that builds memories to last a lifetime.
- **Christmas Programs** bring the spirit of hope to our families in need during the Christmas season through the Adopt-a-Family and Gift Card programs.
- **Sleep Tight Campaign** provides cribs to low-income families who are not able to purchase a crib on their own.

In 2014-15, the Hope for Children Fund granted more than \$120,000 in scholarships helping 105 of the Society's Crown Wards and former Crown Wards attend college, university or trade school.

In 2014, the Hope for Children Fund introduced a new grant to youth who had benefitted from the Scholarship Program and graduated from their post-secondary program.

One of the first recipients of the Graduation Grant was Andrea who graduated in spring 2014 from York University

with a major in Communication Studies and a minor in Anthropology.

Andrea has overcome a number of significant obstacles in her young life. She entered foster care when she was nine years old because her parents could no longer care for her as a result of a tragic accident. She moved in with her brother and her foster parents where she grew up in the GTA.

Andrea says she likes to be referred to as a Crown Ward as it gives her the opportunity to make people aware of the term and what it means to be a Crown Ward.

"It's a way for me to explain who I am without a pre-established notion of what the foster care system is like," explains Andrea.

Andrea attributes her educational achievements to her foster mom and her CCAS worker. Without their encouragement, Andrea would not have applied for post-secondary education.

"I didn't want to be that kid who was in debt for the rest of my life ... that scared me. My worker told me about the financial support available through the Hope for Children Fund, and that was what gave me the encouragement to go to York," says Andrea.

Today, she is living and working in



South Korea where she is teaching English to middle school children.

"It's amazing! I am so grateful to have this opportunity. It was all because of the encouragement of my foster family and the financial support from the Hope for Children Fund that I am where I am today — teaching and empowering children."

Andrea hopes to teach in South Korea for another year and then return to Canada to start a teaching career. Her advice to other kids growing up in foster care is powerful and inspiring:

"It's okay to be afraid, but don't let that fear limit your ability to succeed. Find something in school that you love and are passionate about, and focus on those studies."

The Hope for Children Fund is able to provide these opportunities to Crown Wards thanks to the generous support of its donors.



New Scholarship Salutes Contributions to Child Well-being

A special scholarship fund has been established to honour the legacy of Mary A. McConville who retired as Executive Director of the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto in December, 2014 after 15 years of visionary leadership and dedicated service. If you would like to make a donation to support the *Mary A. McConville Scholarship Fund*, please visit the Hope for Children website at www.hopeforchildren.ca



Service Statistics 2014-2015

Families Served in the Community	4,794
Children Served in the Community	7,227

Ongoing Services

Families Served at Ongoing Services	2,543
Average Number of Cases Open	1,553

Children in Care

Children Served in Care	1,339
Average Number of Cases Open	836
Children Served through Continued Care and Support for Youth	289
Total Days of Care Provided	308,443

Permanency

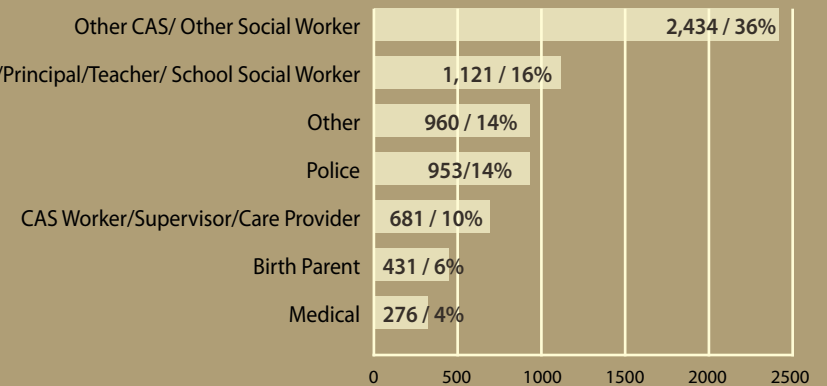
Adoptions Completed	23
Legal Custody Orders Completed	60

Staff/Volunteers/Foster Homes

Staff (Full-time Equivalents)	497
Volunteers	182
CCAS Foster Homes/Group Homes	139

Total Referrals	7,626
Total Investigations Completed	3,039

Top Referral Sources



Financial Statement (in thousands of dollars)

Revenue	Year ended March 31, 2015	Year ended March 31, 2014
Province of Ontario	\$ 91,766	\$ 97,537
Government of Canada	2,245	2,403
Hope for Children	374	328
Other	2,464	3,421
TOTAL	96,849	103,689
Child and Family Services Costs		
Board rate payments	29,751	34,620
Salaries and benefits	45,029	45,081
Travel	2,543	2,575
Children's personal needs	2,663	2,510
Purchased services	718	3,431
Health and related services	1,043	1,184
Financial assistance and special programs	713	495
TOTAL	82,460	89,896
Administrative Costs		
Salaries and benefits	6,583	6,712
Building occupancy	2,345	2,109
Office administration and other	3,458	2,931
Technology and purchased goods and services	1,193	1,077
Training and recruitment	335	264
TOTAL	13,914	13,093
TOTAL COSTS	96,374	102,989
Excess of revenue over expenses for the year	475	700

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

Board of Directors 2014-2015

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Honourary President

Richard Piatti
President

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Board Member

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Board Member

Veronica Pastor
Board Member

John Wilhelm
Board Member

Executive Team

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Executive Director

Mary Juric, M.S.W., R.S.W.
Director of Service

Ken Gibson, C.P.A., C.A., C.M.C., C.B.V.
Director of Finance, Administration and I.T.

Terry Daly, CHRP
Director of Human Resources



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