

MAKING CONNECTIONS

to strengthen families



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ON THE COVER: PAULINE (FORMER YOUTH IN CARE),
STEWART (FORMER YOUTH IN CARE),
SANG-HEE (CCAS CHILD PROTECTION WORKER)
REGENT PARK AQUATIC CENTRE

MAKING CONNECTIONS

to strengthen families

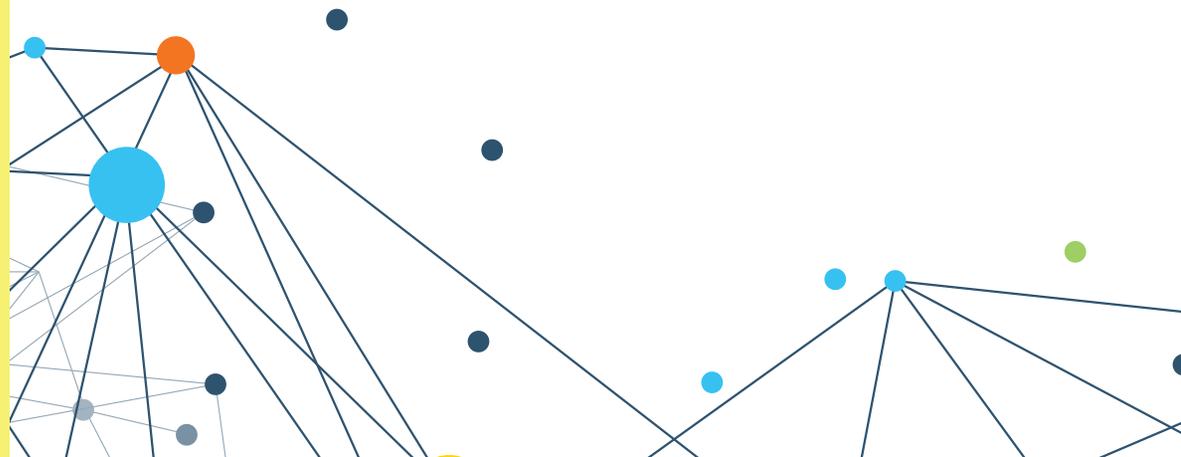
FOR THE *love* OF CHILDREN

We value

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

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.



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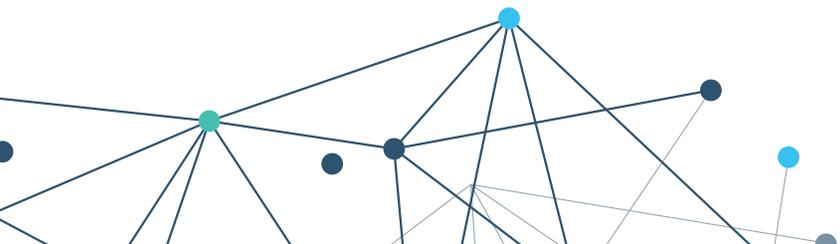
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Anne Creighton, Board President



Janice Robinson, Executive Director

02

Letter from the Executive Director & Board President

Over the past year, CASs in Ontario have come together with the government to address critical systemic issues, including system fragmentation, service variability, equity of access to services and outcomes for children, youth and families.

CCAS has actively contributed to this process as both leader and participant at the Child Welfare Partnership Table and on many work groups implementing the sector's Call to Action plan.

While the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has shifted focus away from involuntary sector amalgamations, CASs are evaluating a number of strategies to address systemic issues. These

include shared services, a sector procurement program, data strategy and a locally shared Intake Screening Model in the City of Toronto.

One of the highlights of the year was the introduction of the government's Bill 89: The Child, Youth and Family Services Act. The Bill seeks to enshrine 'Katelynn's Principle', compelling all service providers to keep the child at the centre of its service planning and delivery. The Bill also contains increased powers for the Minister of Children and Youth Services, with greater emphasis on accountability and oversight. A key element is that it raises the age of protection to 18, bringing Ontario in line with other provinces in Canada.

Each year, CCAS establishes service priorities to strengthen our capacity and the effectiveness of our services. In fiscal 2016-2017, our three priorities were: Improving Services to African Descent Children and Families, The Child Protection Information System Transition to Operations Program and the Enhancing Worker Safety Program.

Improving Services to African Descent Children and Families

is a key priority for Children's Aid Societies across the province. We are working closely with our staff to address the over-representation of African descent children, youth and families in our services, having honest conversations with each other about anti-black racism and discrimination, breaking down barriers and creating a space for new ways of thinking about racism, and serving our African-Canadian families.

Working with the University of Toronto, CCAS has established a rigorous methodology to measure and analyze our disaggregated service data.

The Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) is a centralized, integrated electronic system for supporting case information, financial information, document management and reporting. CPIN allows the sharing of information between CASS across the province and enhances child safety through improved information management. This year, the CPIN Transition to Operations team of facilitators has been working directly with front-line supervisors to strengthen their CPIN expertise and build their capacity to mentor and coach staff to integrate CPIN into their day-to-day practice.

We are grateful for the professionalism and dedication of our staff, and we recognize the importance of investing in their health and wellbeing through our **Enhancing Worker Safety Program**. Working together with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, the sector is developing processes for reporting incidents such as workplace violence, occupational illness, critical injury and psychological injury, along with tools for assessing worker health and safety.

The Society receives support from our Catholic community every day, through generous donations, scholarships for our youth and the work of our dedicated volunteers. The Board of Directors in their role as governors of the Society are courageous, judicious and compassionate. They have grappled with significant issues this year, both from local and provincial perspectives. They are ardent supporters of our staff and the work they do. We would be lost were it not for the constant, unrelenting care and commitment of our foster, kin and adoptive parents. Lastly, we continue to be inspired on a daily basis by the strength and resiliency of the children, youth and families we serve.

As always, we encourage all members of Toronto's Catholic community to reach out to us if they are concerned about a child or youth's safety and wellbeing, and we will be there to help. Our greatest hope is that, together with the Toronto community, we contribute to the safety, wellbeing and happiness of all children.

Anne Creighton, Board President

Janice Robinson, Executive Director

Evidence-Informed Practice Leads to Higher Quality Services and Improved Client Outcomes

CCAS is in the early stages of supporting its workers to adopt Evidence-Informed Practice (EIP). EIP is not just about accessing the research literature or implementing an evidence-based practice or model; it is a way of *being* in our work with our clients.

Evidence-informed practice brings together practitioner knowledge and expertise with the best available evidence from research, combined with respecting clients' needs and wishes, while utilizing our unique understanding of their situation. In the words of Eileen Gambrill (a pioneer in bringing together EIP and social work), *it is about sharing knowledge, as well as ignorance and uncertainty, with our clients.*

An evidence-informed practice approach involves intentionally seeking out and integrating several bodies of evidence when making decisions about and with our service recipients:

- Case context
- Client values and preferences
- Practice wisdom and experience
- Best available research evidence

In doing so, it is consistent with anti-oppressive practice, as it requires us to actively solicit clients' views about their needs as a valuable source of evidence, and requires us to examine what we know and how we have come to know it. An EIP approach invites us to share the evidence base for what we ask clients to do with them, including multiple options and choices, where available.

CCAS is promoting evidence-informed practice through:

- The formation of an EIP committee that recently developed a plan for implementing EIP across the agency
- Providing managers and supervisors with access to Practice and Research Together (PART) webinars, and encouraging them to watch them with their teams
- Circulating research abstracts to all service areas, and updating the e-library with the latest child welfare literature each month (knowledge mobilization)
- Working with service teams within the organization to unpack difficult cases using an EIP framework, and supporting them to formulate questions about service to pose to the literature
- Developing capacity for an evidence-based practice approach at the individual and organizational level, including supporting evidence-informed program development and implementation

CCAS is committed to promoting a culture of learning, knowledge and Evidence-Informed Practice

An evidence-informed practice approach involves intentionally seeking out and integrating several bodies of evidence when making decisions about and with our service recipients:



Case context



Practice wisdom & experience



Client values & preferences



Best available research evidence

For more information about EIP, please go to the PART website at www.partcanada.org



Kinship Families: the Unshakable Bond between Grandparents and their Grandchildren

“Just when I thought I was too old to fall in love again, I became a grandparent.” This expression perfectly portrays the feelings Mary and Bob felt when their grandson Marcus came into their care via CCAS’s kinship program in 2005.

“We were close with Marcus right from the beginning,” tells Mary. “We brought our daughter and the baby home from the hospital, and Marcus would often stay with us on weekends.” When Marcus was just two years old, his mom started having issues with the law. One day, the police raided her home in a drug search, and Mary was called on to pick up Marcus to keep him out of harm’s way while the raid was in progress. That was a turning point for Mary and Bob, who decided a few months later, when their daughter’s bail had been revoked and she was placed back in police custody that they would step in and play more than a traditional grandparent role in young Marcus’ life.

Mary and Bob had both retired in August 2005, just a few months before things came to that critical boiling point with their daughter. “Our lives were simple and quiet, and that’s the way we wanted it. We figured we were going to retire, sit around, relax and do nothing.”

Once CCAS was contacted and it was agreed that Marcus needed and deserved a more stable home environment, Mary and Bob talked, and Bob – who is Mary’s partner, but not Marcus’ biological grandfather – said, “We have to take him. He’s our grandson. That’s all there is to it.”

Very quickly Mary and Bob’s life together changed drastically, and their new reality included getting up at all hours of the morning, feeding, bathing, dressing and toilet training a toddler. Mary, who has two children of her own, said, “I thought – oh wow. I’ve done this once before already! I didn’t expect to be back there in my fifties.”

Permanency is paramount in our service framework. Mary and Bob understand the importance of a solid, permanent home for children. Marcus is 14-years-old now, and as Mary tells it, “Without a permanent home, I don’t think Marcus would be the young man he is today. He’s so calm and mannerly. This kid could go anywhere and light up a room.” Part of the benefit of being in a permanent home was that, with Mary and Bob’s support, Marcus was able to gain momentum and make significant progress in his extracurricular activities: “He was in baseball, soccer and skating, and he’s been in karate for the last six years and just got his Black Belt. We’ve always kept him active and thought that a kid who is busy is a kid who is out of trouble.”

Mary also credits the strong bond built over the years between Marcus and his step-grandfather Bob as playing a large role in his success. “Bob loved him like he was his own from day one. The relationship they have is so special. They love each other so much.”

Mary and Bob are a unique couple in their capacity to sacrifice parts of life as a retired couple in order to start back at square one as parents, but if they could go back, they wouldn’t change a thing. They also credit CCAS with making the journey a smooth one for their family: “We couldn’t have done it



244 kinship families provided care for children in the past fiscal year*

*Kinship families include those caring for children through both kinship service (out of care) and more formal kin-in-care arrangements.

without the wonderful workers we’ve had over the years. They’ve helped us in so many ways, and it’s a sense of security knowing that if anything happens to us, Marcus will be looked after.”

Mary, Bob and Marcus have experienced all sorts of special moments together over the years: his First Holy Communion, his grade eight graduation, shedding tears over cuts and scrapes and sharing jokes over the kitchen table. “He’s been such a joy to raise. The best reward is watching my grandson grow up healthy, happy and well-adjusted.”



LEFT TO RIGHT: MARY, MARCUS AND BOB
QUEEN EAST, THE BEACH

Transformation in Action: Improving our Services to African Descent Families

The African descent community has called on the child welfare sector to examine its services and approaches through an Anti-racism Anti-oppression (ARAO) lens, in order to address over-representation of African descent clients.

At CCAS, we are working with community partners to provide better service for our families of African descent. This priority project (part of our 2015-2018 Service Plan) aims to reduce and eliminate disproportionality, disparity, anti-black racism and discrimination towards children, youth and their families of African descent, while supporting child safety, permanency and wellbeing.

Research

→ CCAS has met with thought leaders of ARAO practice, including representatives from the State of Texas, whose model for reducing and eliminating disproportionality and disparity within their child welfare system has been groundbreaking. The “Texas Model” provides training to members of the community, such as police and judges, who have an impact on referrals and the experiences of African descent families within the child welfare system. With the “Texas Model” as a backdrop to our work, we have identified practices and procedures that we have begun to implement in our service delivery.

Internal Environment

→ At CCAS, we are engaging our staff in discussions to address issues of Race, Racism and Anti-Black Racism, both in our services and our internal work environment. By acknowledging that racism exists in our agency and within our service delivery, we can begin to challenge beliefs and values about racism and oppression through honest conversations and facilitated training.

→ We have partnered with a diversity and inclusion consultant who has assisted us in initiating and facilitating challenging conversations among staff, in order to create a space of open dialogue and sharing of ideas, experience, beliefs and values about racism and Anti-Black racism.

Service Delivery

→ CCAS is currently working on addressing disproportionality and disparity within our service continuum. We know that there is an overrepresentation of Black Catholic children who are referred to our agency by the community, and that we admit a higher number of Black children into care than White children. One of the ways we are addressing these biases is through an advisory group comprised of agency staff, caregivers and community partners. The advisory group has begun to review policies and procedures, service outcomes, such as analysing services from entry to exit and noting differences along the service continuum, as well as beginning to work on mechanisms for creating respectful, culturally sensitive service.

Evaluation

→ CCAS collects race-based data to assess over-representation, identify underlying causes and measure service outcomes. We obtained data from Stats Canada regarding the Catholic community in Toronto, which created a baseline for our analysis that was more representative of the families we serve. Our data tells a numbers story of who we interact with along the service continuum; however, we need to take a deeper look at the underlying causes to understand why disparities exist.

Sustainability & Accountability

→ We are committed to implementing the provincial practice framework aimed at improving outcomes for African descent families, outlined in the report, entitled *One Vision One Voice*.

→ In order to reduce and eliminate disproportionality and disparity, we are committed to addressing and implementing the following mechanisms at CCAS:

- + Change policies and practice guidelines to align with ARAO guidelines
- + Keep the conversations about racism going: we cannot back away from dialoguing about race, ethnicity and our experiences no matter how uncomfortable those conversations may become. This will have a direct impact on our work with African decent children, youth and families.

+ Remain accountable to each other and our stakeholders. We can achieve this by adopting mechanisms to regularly assess how we are doing better. This can be achieved through community consultations, analyzing race-based data and ongoing conversations and clinical supervisions with staff.

→ We are working in partnership with the community to help keep us accountable in our work to African descent families through feedback mechanisms and consultations. We commit to reporting back to the community regularly through our communication vehicles, such as publications and our website.

Community Collaboration & Partnership

→ We are working closely with community partners to help us deliver culturally appropriate services to our African descent families. Partnerships with organizations like the African Canadian Legal Clinic, CAMH Substance Abuse Program for African Canadian and Caribbean Youth (SAPACCY), Delta Family Resource Centre (Black Youth Transition Program) and RITES of Passage (through Woodgreen Community Services) are just a few of the ways we are working to make this happen.

→ By building and strengthening our community partnerships, we will move forward together to grow and be more accountable to our African descent families.

06

PROPORTION OF BLACK CHILDREN REFERRED TO CCAS

Out of the Catholic child population in the GTA,

9% are Black.

Out of the total investigations conducted, 31% of investigations pertain to Black children.

Community refers disproportionate number of Black children to CCAS compared to White children.



WORKING WITH
FAMILIES IN THE
COMMUNITY

No significant difference in CCAS service decisions between Black and White children until...

ADMISSION
TO
CARE

CCAS is more likely to admit Black children into care than White children. We are still exploring reasons for this disparity.

37%

OF CHILDREN
ADMITTED INTO
CCAS CARE
ARE BLACK.

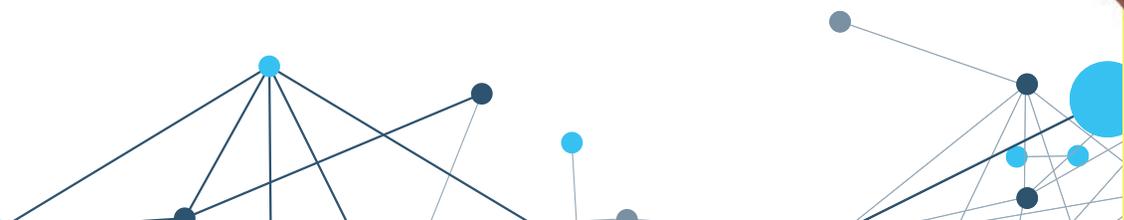
In our endeavours to make our services to African descent families more culturally appropriate, we have partnered with more than 20 Toronto-based organizations, including one that we are particularly excited about working with - Ujima House.

Ujima House operates an innovative program, entitled Young & Potential Fathers Initiative. Ujima House creates a space where young fathers and father figures, aged 15 to 30, gather to gain and give support to each other in becoming active, involved fathers. The initiative addresses the cycles of disengagement, the lack of resources and the lack of visible role models for young, racialized fathers in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods. It endeavours to strengthen the capacity of individuals, families and the community at large, by offering programs, services, one-on-one personal support, mentoring and a space for supervised access and exchanges. These programs help fathers better understand child development, the role of a father and the importance of bonding and involvement with their children.

CCAS recently partnered with Ujima House as part of our Supporting Family Connections Program. We have been working together to help single and partnered fathers embrace fatherhood and soon we will be engaging in consulting work to help fathers successfully navigate the child welfare system. We recognize that young potential fathers and father figures play a significant role in developing a child's life, and we are excited to be working with African-Canadian fathers, supporting their journey to become strong, successful and accountable parents.

SUPPORTING
FATHERS WITH
CHILDREN AGED

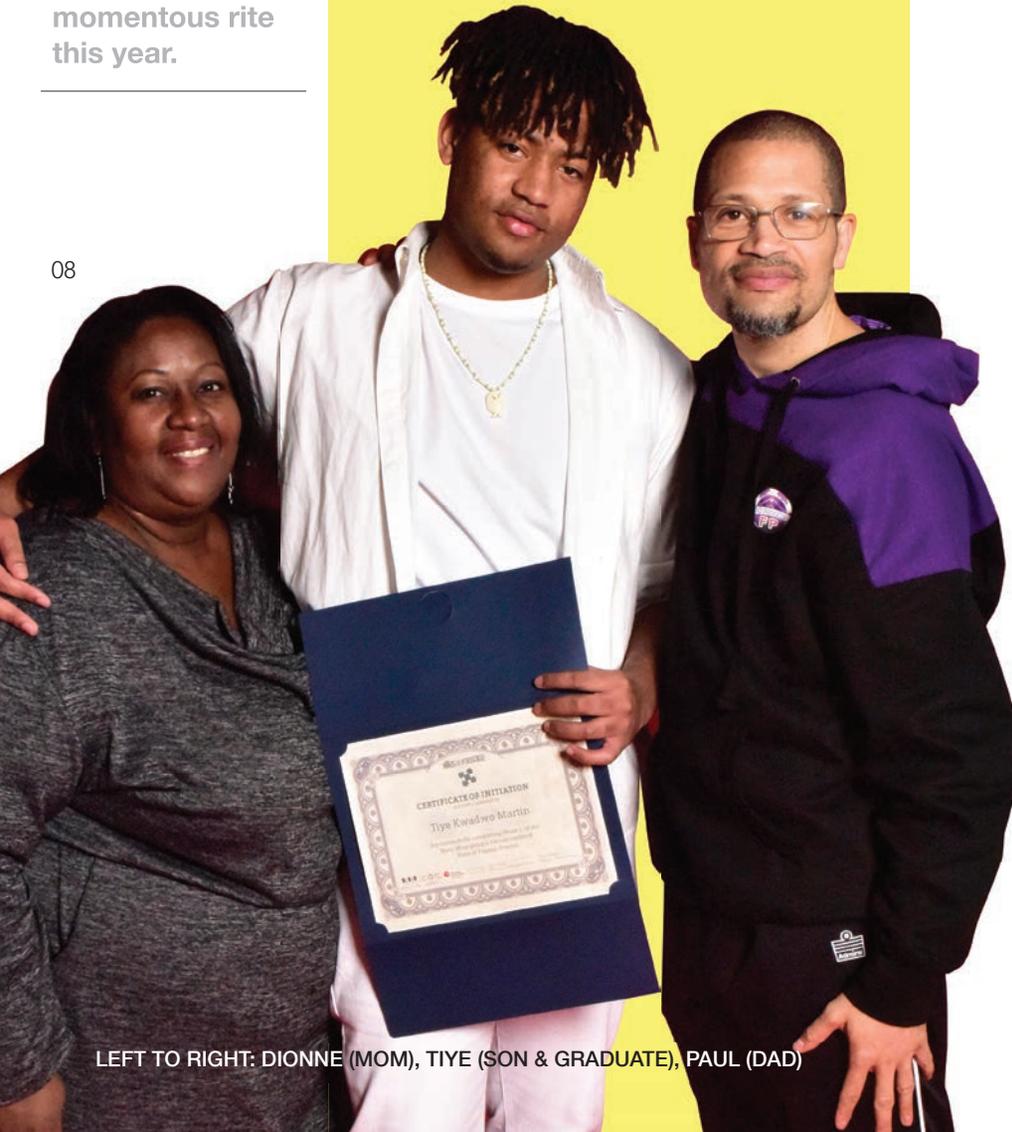
6 mos to
12 yrs



12

CCAS youth in care participated in a unique and momentous rite this year.

Rites of Passage: Creating New Traditions for African-Canadian Youth in Care



LEFT TO RIGHT: DIONNE (MOM), TIYE (SON & GRADUATE), PAUL (DAD)



If you fall, we will be here to catch you, to hold you up.

As we move through the stages of childhood into adulthood, we typically experience various rites of passage. The informal ones can happen naturally – the first day of school, learning to drive, graduation – but the more formal rites, like Quinceañeras, First Communions and Bar Mitzvahs can require a significant amount of effort and financial commitment, but are as - if not more - important to recognize. They serve as an opportunity for reflection, learning and reverence, to prepare ourselves mentally, emotionally and spiritually to enter into a new phase of life.

These rites are crucial to developing, fostering and reinforcing a sense of purpose and belonging, especially for African-Canadian youth in care, who are often treated by society as having less potential.

Through our partnership with Woodgreen Community Services, 12 CCAS youth in care participated in a unique and momentous rite this year. Rites of Passage is a program that ushers young people of African descent into responsible adulthood. The six-to-12-month program is based on a well-tested, internationally-recognized, Afrocentric curriculum and includes volunteering, leadership training and employment.

Rites of Passage focuses on four pillars of leadership, rooted in the Akan tradition of West Africa: nurturing responsible adulthood, developing a sense of purpose, building a community perspective and fostering resiliency. Leaders guide the youth through exercises to build self-worth and a sense of community, endeavouring to drive youth towards long-term personal growth and success. Through introspection and discussion, participants develop goals based on their own values.

The Rites journey asks youth to answer four important questions:

- 1) Who am I?
- 2) How did I come to be who I am?
- 3) Am I really who I think I am?
- 4) What is my life's purpose?

In a symbolic expression during this year's graduation ceremony, new graduates stood on a stage blindfolded, while members of their community stood behind them as they fell back into their arms, telling them in essence that if you fall, we will be here to catch you, to hold you up.

T., this year's youngest Rites of Passage graduate at age 13, shared what she appreciated about the program: "My most favourite thing about the experience was having gone through all the stages and the whole experience: the retreat, the chance to go skating and the chance to meet other black people in care and see how they've grown up to be successful. I learned there are a lot of things that black people can do in the community, even if you're in care." T. also said that, "It changed how I thought about my culture and how I think about other black people around me. I was surprised how much I didn't know about African culture."

Another recent graduate, 17-year-old J., talked about some of his favourite moments in the Rites process: "When we went on the retreat, we learned about our background. We learned that our ancestors didn't just drum for music; it was a spiritual experience for them. I also learned to create my own pathway and not to follow the paths of friends or anyone else, and that if there's an opportunity, don't wait for it to come to you – go towards the opportunity."

Rites of Passage gives youth a space where black is beautiful, where they see, hear and feel positive things about their culture, identity and heritage. They learn that there is a community out there that looks like them that wants to see them grow, thrive and achieve, infusing a sense of belonging, joy and love for who they are as part of the African descent community and supporting them as they move through the many phases of life.

The Rites of Passage Program was funded through Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent and Strategic Service Initiatives



LEFT TO RIGHT: KIM (CCAS CHILD PROTECTION SUPERVISOR), JANICE (CCAS FOSTER PARENT),
DIONNE (CCAS CHILD PROTECTION MANAGER – STRATEGIC SERVICE INITIATIVE LEAD)
RIVERDALE IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S CENTRE



About HFC Scholarship Program

Since 1986, the Hope for Children Fund has awarded more than \$3 million in scholarships and special achievement grants, supporting nearly 2,500 CCAS youth in care and former youth in care.

With the rising cost of education, post-secondary students receive financial support from their parents to be able to continue their education. Today, it costs nearly \$21,000 for one year of university education including tuition, books, food and accommodations. Without parents to support them, youth in care often struggle to afford higher education.

Our scholarship program addresses these needs by offering student grants to help reduce annual tuition fees. The program helps remove financial barriers by offering youth up to five years of funding for both college and university-level programs. Through the Hope for Children Scholarship Program, we provide our youth the opportunity to pursue educational goals that will help them be successful in their chosen career.

“Dear kind-hearted people,

I appreciate your generosity so much. You can't even imagine how much this means to my family. God bless you all and your families. Thank you so much for the love you've shown us.”

– The R Family
Adopt-a-Family
Recipient

www.torontoccas.org

HFC brings hope to children, youth, and families at Christmas through our Adopt-a-Family and Gift Card programs

Thank you very much for the surprise generous Christmas presents.

My siblings and I were very excited to see the big bags of gifts with our names on them. We really appreciated the things you gave us to make our Christmas great this year! ”

Sincerely, A. (age 15) and K. (age 13)



Dear Catholic Children's Aid Society and Hope for Children Donor,

My dream is to change the world....to change and impact the lives of children and youth in the foster care system, so they can be their best selves, and in turn, make a difference in our world. I hope to use my future career to move this dream from aspiration to action.

As a former youth in care, I understand what it means to be supported by your agency. I have never received so much love and care from people I didn't know until I met CCAS staff, foster parents and group home staff. I want to help make children's lives better, just as they did mine.

Like many Crown Wards, I chose a somewhat altered path to post-secondary education. During my teen years, I struggled with school and had many challenges to overcome. But as they say, "it's never too late to reach your goals," and, I did just that by returning to high school as a mature student. At the age of 24, I graduated valedictorian of my high school class and was then ready to move onto higher education.

Thanks to your generous contribution through the Enid McDiarmid Scholarship Fund, I am attending Niagara College in the Child and Youth Worker diploma program. As my donor, you have helped me tremendously, both academically and financially. This scholarship has helped to take away some daily stressors for me, and for that, I cannot be more grateful.

During the fall semester at College, I relied on the support of my past CCAS worker and my school counsellor to see me through the hills and valleys of navigating a challenging course load, while being a full-time mother of two young children. I'm grateful to still have an ongoing relationship with my former CCAS worker – thank you for your continued support, even after I left care.

I am who I am today because of my past, and I embrace a positive and optimistic mindset as I look to the future - to graduating College in 2018.

Sincerely, Yanique
Scholarship Recipient

“Yanique has an inner strength that grounds her and helps her face every challenge head on. She has shown me what true resilience and strength look like.”

Christine Lee
(Yanique's former Child & Youth Worker)



LEFT TO RIGHT: DIONNE, JANICE, KIM
KENSINGTON MARKET

2016-2017 Service Statistics

Service



4,759 Families Served
in Community with
Protection Concerns

7,547 Children Served
in Community with
Protection Concerns



506.5
Staff
(FTE)*



182
Volunteers

127
Foster and Kinship
Care Homes



280 Youth Served through
Continued Care and
Support for Youth Program

**Total days of
Care Provided**

268,581

*Full-Time Equivalent

Children Served

7,547

972

280

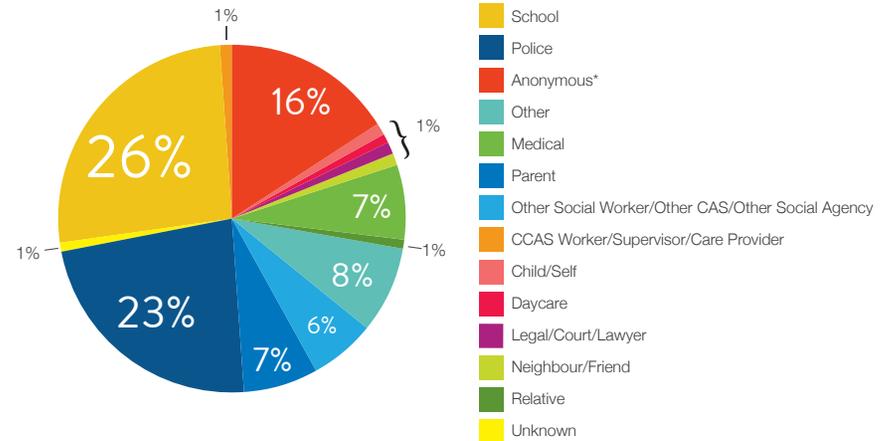
26

- Children Served in the Community
- Children Served in Care
- Youth Served through CCSY
- Adoptions Completed

97% Percentage of children
remaining at home with their families



Total Referrals Involving Protection



* Our Child Protection Information Network database allows for anonymous reporting

7,520 Total Families Referred



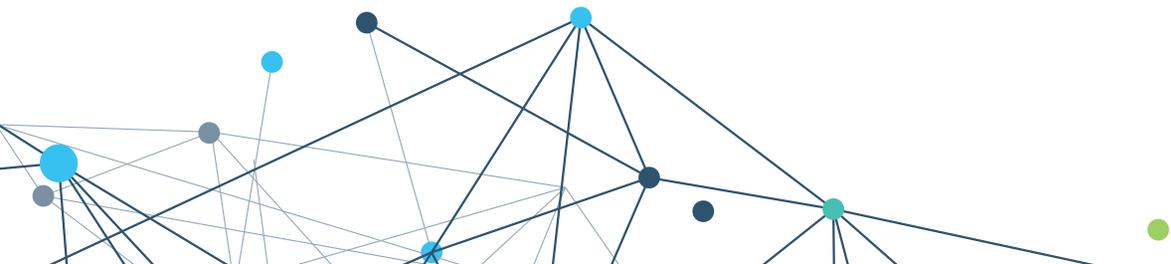
2,792 Total Referrals Opened



2,748 Total Investigations Completed

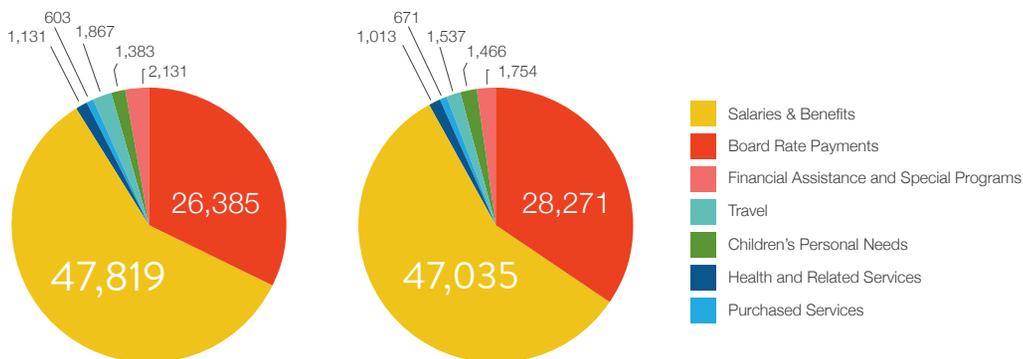


2,303 Families Served at Ongoing Protection



2016-2017 Financials

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES COSTS (in thousands of dollars)



TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2017
81,319

TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2016
81,747

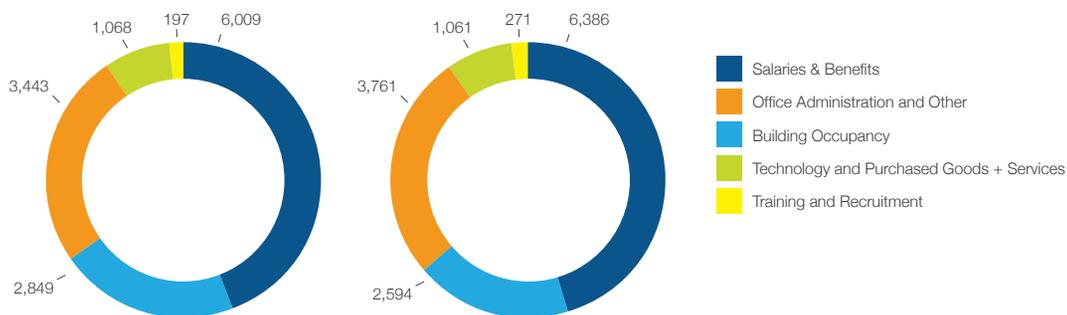
REVENUE (in thousands of dollars)



TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2017
95,506

TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2016
94,915

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS (in thousands of dollars)



TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2017
13,566

TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2016
14,073

TOTAL COSTS (in thousands of dollars)

2017

TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2017
94,885

2016

TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2016
95,820

Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses for the year

TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2017
621

TOTAL
Year ended March 31, 2016
(905)



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