



advocacy matters

ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15



CHILDREN'S
AID SOCIETY
of TORONTO

LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE L'AIDE à
L'ENFANCE
DE TORONTO

MESSAGE FROM Our CEO & Board Chair

Every day the staff, volunteers, community partners and stakeholders associated with the Children's Aid Society of Toronto work diligently toward making our Vision of **'A city where children are safe, families are strong and communities are supported'** come alive. This is accomplished through thoughtful strength based service planning, the collaborative support of community services and groups and a strategic advocacy plan. It is under the umbrella of our advocacy initiatives, where an important part of the work of being a leader in the field of child protection and child well-being happens. If advocacy is sharing our voice with parents and partners to promote social justice and build strong communities-then there is little doubt that the Children's Aid Society of Toronto has been engaged formally in advocacy work for almost 50 years.

Our Community Development & Prevention program has been an integral part of the Toronto social services landscape since 1968, and currently has the lead role in the planning and implementation of the agency's advocacy agenda. Embedded in our organization's current strategic plan is the promotion of three priority advocacy issues directly linked to child and family safety and well being:



Affordable and Safe Housing



Improved Income Security



Improved Mental Health Support Services

These priorities reflect the reality of many of those who we serve. With almost 100,000 households in Toronto waiting for rent geared to income housing, we know that poverty is one of the main causes of homelessness for women and families. We often work with families or youth who are on the verge of being homeless, or are homeless. We also know that Toronto has the highest child poverty rate of cities across Canada. So how do we make our advocacy efforts matter for those children, youth and their families who have little or no voice, and how effective have we been in pursuit of our three priorities?

Our housing advocacy activities have yielded very positive outcomes recently, highlights include:

- Working with community allies to prevent the privatization and cuts to City shelters, we effectively stopped the sale of 300 subsidized family houses
- Collaborating with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Wellesley Institute and Employment and Social Development Canada, we co-authored a major research study entitled *Hidden in Our Midst: Homeless Newcomer Youth in Toronto*, that examined the problems facing homeless newcomer youth in Toronto. This report garnered impressive media attention, engaged youth as community researchers and heard from community agencies and various ethno-specific services to help identify and make recommendations to improve outcomes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from Our CEO & Board Chair	1
Notable Accomplishments	3
Year in Review	5
Financials	7
Board of Directors	7
Our Branches	7

- Participated with West Coalition on Housing and Homelessness to host focus groups regarding the affordability and safety of high rise apartments for families in North West area of Toronto.
- Member of the Right 2 Housing Coalition, which has filed a Charter Challenge to enshrine the right to housing, resulting in a national, measureable housing and homelessness prevention strategy.

Our work advocating for better income security as well has had success with the following impressive outcomes.

- Our Community Development team led a group of researchers that produced a report entitled *The Hidden Epidemic: A Report on Child and Family Poverty in Toronto*. This report detailed which children are most effected by poverty and why. It was successfully received and promoted in the media providing lead researcher Michael Polanyi from our Community Development team an opportunity to appear on the TVOntario news and political affairs show *The Agenda*, to discuss its findings.
- CAS of Toronto was one of a select few community agencies asked to endorse a letter to the City of Toronto calling for the creation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy, as well as being asked to participate on a City Advisory Committee on Poverty.
- We continue to develop and deliver advocacy workshops for Disability Support recipients

Working to better understand the relationship between mental health and child protection is a new and dynamic initiative for our agency. For too long we have seen the tragic effects on families when a caregiver cannot access mental health services. We have projects under way that address the issue from both the youth and adult perspectives.

- Working and advocating with community service providers we have endorsed the expansion of a new mobile crisis intervention pilot project that has been rolled out across the city.
- As well, we have expanded our LGBTQ youth and family supports through our work and partnerships with a variety of advocacy groups that work to assist LGBTQ youth
- Our most ambitious and innovative mental health initiative is our *Healthy Families* project, a collaboration with the Canadian Mental Health Association (Toronto Branch). CMHA workers deliver service to an adult caregiver in a family where the CAS worker is concerned about their mental health. One of the primary objectives of the *Healthy Families* project is to provide timely mental health assessments and referrals to community resources for the caregiver. Recognizing the effectiveness of the initiative and hearing our continued advocacy for it, the original 13 month pilot project has been approved for funding into the foreseeable future.

Advocacy Matters because it is aimed at influencing public policy. Advocacy contributes to and nurtures the support of a society based on equity, inclusion and participation. The exact type of society that our staff, volunteers, Children's Aid Foundation and stakeholders have worked tirelessly for decades to strengthen and build.



Anthony Fralick
Chair, Board of Directors



David Rivard
Chief Executive Officer

NOTABLE

Accomplishments

In October, we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of our Same Sex Fostering and Adoption Policy. Board members past and present, community advocates, service providers, equal rights legal champions, resource parents, staff and alumni, attended an evening recognizing and reflecting on two historic policies passed by the Board of Directors two decades ago.



Rolled out the agency's mobile technology strategy by providing, configuring and supporting over 700 laptop computers for staff. This initiative allows our employees to securely access and record client information while working in the community.



The Black Education Awareness Committee's proposal to hire a full time coordinator was approved by CAS of Toronto's Executive Team. This dedicated position will greatly aid in advancing the work of the Committee by broadening the participation of youth in programming and expanding outreach to staff, caregivers, and service providers.



The Child Welfare Institute led a 3-year, \$700,000 Public Health Agency of Canada project that saw the creation of:



A community of practice website (FASDchildwelfare.ca), that inventories all FASD services offered across Ontario,



A leading edge three province study on the prevalence of FASD in child welfare populations,



A web-based training curriculum on FASD giving all caregivers across Canada the opportunity to access, free of charge, the most up-to-date, evidence-informed training.

Successfully migrated 4.5 million client service and care provider records from previous computer system into the new Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) in preparation for its launch.

 **4,500,000**
Records

In January we officially introduced the Youth Led Family Group Conferencing Project, in partnership with the George Hull Center. Through consultation with a program coordinator, the youth themselves decide whether they want a family group conference, who to invite and what goals to work toward. The program is one of the first in the province to adopt this unique approach of youth engagement and partnership with the goal of supporting youth in transition and leaving care.



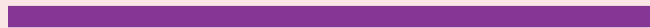
**Youth Led Family
Conferencing Project**

YEAR IN REVIEW

Who We Worked With

Children

23,820 / 2013-14



21,122 / 2014-15



Families

11,285 / 2013-14



10,007 / 2014-15



A Snapshot of Our Work

Inquiries that resulted in a service record

13,960 2013-14

13,195 2014-15

Community links completed

331 2013-14

276 2014-15

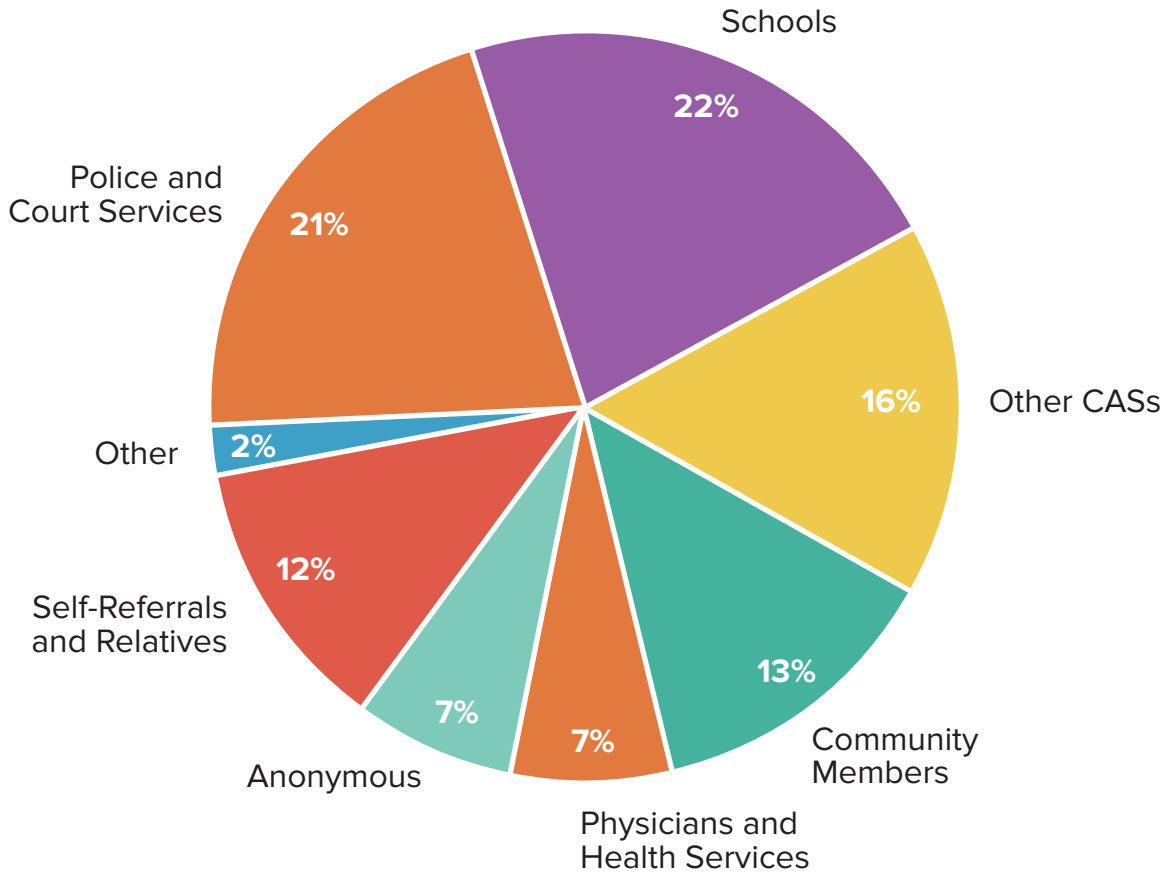
Investigations completed

7,062 2013-14

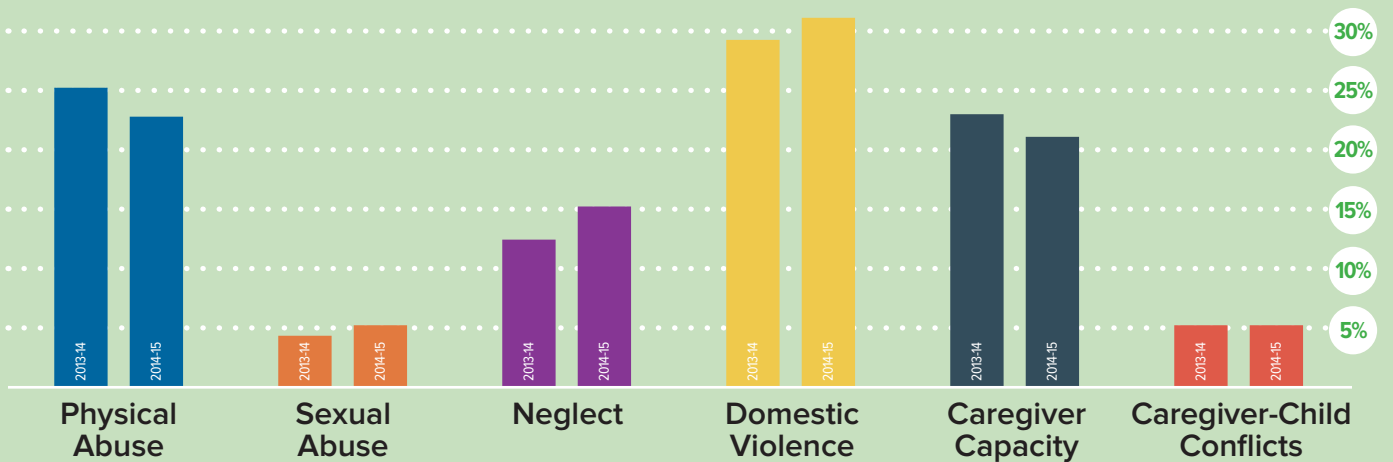
7,052 2014-15

	2013-14	2014-15
Families Served by FASD Respite Program	40	40
Families Served by Therapeutic Access Centre	73	51
Adoptions Completed	80	59
Adoption & Former Crown Wardship Disclosure	508	590
Families Receiving Adoption Subsidies	502	558
Kinship Service Families (out of care, monthly average)	151	192
Speaker's Bureau Presentations	82	124
Volunteers	480	382
Foster families	212	212

Referral Sources



Allegations



Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Anthony Fralick, Chair
 Karen Engel, Vice-Chair
 Tony Veneziano, Treasurer
 Sheila Jarvis, Secretary
 David Rivard, Chief Executive Officer

Board Members

Marv Bernstein	Niru Kumar	Kanchan Rakhra
Gerry Connelly	Steve Malone	Eva Serhal
Barbara Hopper	Noella Milne	Athavan Thulakanathan
Jamil Jivani	Ramona Oss	Margot Trevelyan
Victoria Kondo	Haroldene Peters	Wayne Zronik

Financials

Revenue By Source	2013-14	2014-15
Government of Ontario	160,420	157,417
Government of Canada	3,687	3,667
Children's Aid Foundation	2,280	3,662
Sundry	2,334	1,870
Total	168,721	166,616

Government of Ontario Revenue by Program	2013-14	2014-15
Child Welfare Program	156,859	154,138
Generic contracts	2,077	1,707
OCBe	1,484	1,572
Total	160,420	157,417

Expenses	2013-14	2014-15
Salaries & Benefits	83,284	85,978
Boarding	53,819	47,934
Other	30,479	32,520
Total	167,582	166,432

Summary of Operations	2013-14	2014-15
Revenue	168,721	166,616
Expenses	167,582	166,432
Excess of revenue over expenses	1,139	184

Audited financial statements are available upon request.

Branches



CENTRAL BRANCH
30 Isabella Street



NORTHWEST SITE
20 De Boers Drive



SCARBOROUGH BRANCH
843 Kennedy Road



advocacy matters



Our community partnerships support stronger families and child well-being

HOUSING



In **1 in 5** child admissions to our care, housing issues were a factor



9 in 10 low-income families in GTA high-rises at risk of homelessness

Collective Action



Partnered with youth and agencies in research to improve services for newcomer, homeless youth

- ✔ Provided support to the Right2Housing Coalition Charter Challenge
- ✔ We increased CAS staff knowledge to navigate housing supports
- ✔ We supported 135 low-income families and over 300 children in accessing the Furniture Bank

INCOME SECURITY



Toronto has the **highest child poverty rate** among cities in Canada



Households of non-European background are **1.5 to 3 times** more likely to be living in poverty

Collective Action



Our advocacy helped City Council to create a Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy



Co-authored the *Hidden Epidemic: Report on Child and Family Poverty in Toronto*

- ✔ Successfully advocated for school nutrition, youth community spaces and after-school programs
- ✔ Supported Ontario Disability Support Program Action Group advocacy workshop for over 100 residents with disabilities and community groups

MENTAL HEALTH & CHILD & FAMILY WELL-BEING



Newcomer, homeless youth in Toronto identified **mental health challenges and trauma**



Only **1 in 7** children aged 6-12 in Toronto have access to after-school programs

Collective Action



Healthy Families Pilot Project with the Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto Branch has successfully serviced 163 clients and the program continues

- ✔ Active member of the Ministry of Children and Youth Advisory Committee on LGBTIQ Services
- ✔ As a member of the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition, we advanced Toronto's policies to expand out-of-school programs for children aged 6-12