



For Immediate Release  
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### **More Foster Families Needed in Ontario**

TORONTO – During Foster Family Week, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and its member agencies recognize families who give of their time and themselves by nurturing and fostering vulnerable children and youth.

"Foster families provide a precious gift to children in care. They share their love, their home and their family with our most vulnerable children," said Jeanette Lewis, Executive Director of the OACAS. "Foster Family Week is a good time to recognize those caring families who open their homes and their hearts to children who have suffered maltreatment and need a stable, loving home."

Last year, 58.5% of children in the care of Ontario's Children's Aid Societies were placed with a foster family while 16.1% were placed in group homes, 4.4% with adoptive families, 5.3% with kinship families and 15.8% were living on their own. With 7,700 foster families in Ontario, there are still not enough homes available to provide temporary shelter to all the children coming into care who cannot remain with their families.

Since 2000, when neglect was added to the Child and Family Services Act, the number of foster families has increased only marginally (14%) while the number of children in need of protection increased 24%. More foster families who can provide safe, loving, secure homes to the vulnerable children who come into the care of Ontario's Children's Aid Societies are needed. There is an urgent need for foster families for teenagers, as only 60% of all youth in care aged 13 to 15 years are in a foster family setting, and for younger children and sibling groups. There is also a pressing need for foster families from diverse backgrounds and ethno-cultural communities.

"Fostering brings caring and compassionate people and the kids who need them together," said Cecile Brookes, President of the Foster Parents Society of Ontario. "Fostering is a rewarding experience, a chance to make a difference one child at a time. We need more extraordinary people to consider becoming foster parents, to be a safe harbour to children and youth in need."

Ontario's Children's Aid Societies work very hard to help children remain with their families. Last year, more than 44,000 Ontario families received child welfare services and parenting supports from a Children's Aid Society to cope with stress, poverty, addiction or mental health problems. When children cannot remain at home because of serious concerns about their safety and protection, they come into the care of a child welfare agency that makes every effort to give a family and a home to every child in need of protection. Last year, Ontario's Children's Aid Societies provided substitute care for 29,000 children.

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Foster parents work closely with Children's Aid Societies to provide temporary care to children for a few days, a week, several months or possibly years. They also prepare children for reunification with their biological family, adoption or long-term foster care. Children's Aid Societies support foster families through assessment, training and education, ongoing assistance as well as financial supports for the child's care, food and clothing.

If you are considering fostering, please contact your local Children's Aid Society for more information or visit [www.oacas.org](http://www.oacas.org).

OACAS is a membership organization representing Children's Aid Societies in Ontario. Since 1912, the OACAS has provided services in the areas of advocacy, government relations, communications, youth in care, information management, education and training, accreditation and member outreach. OACAS is the voice of child welfare in Ontario.

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