

It takes a community to keep kids safe from fear, harm and violence October is Child Abuse Prevention Month

TORONTO – October is Child Abuse Prevention Month and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and Children's Aid Societies (CASs) are calling on the community to help protect children from fear, harm and violence, and to support families in crisis.

OACAS and CASs are spreading the message that child safety and family welfare depend on the involvement of the community. It is every Ontarian's responsibility to protect children, the most vulnerable members of our community, and report any suspicion that a child may be in need of protection.

The Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Children and Youth Services said: *"Our government believes that every child in Ontario deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. That is why I am joining the members of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies in urging those who may have witnessed abuse or neglect to report it. It's the right thing to do."*

This year, the campaign will focus on building awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect and the role of the community in reporting any concern that a child may be in need of protection. OACAS Child Abuse Prevention materials include new Duty to Report information on the role of all Ontarians to report suspected child abuse and neglect and help protect children from harm.

Children's Aid supports the community's most vulnerable children, youth and families to help create positive outcomes. Last year, Children's Aid received more than 171,118¹ referrals about possible abuse and neglect of children and youth. Children's Aid Societies completed over 81,099¹ investigations and 47,893¹ families received ongoing protection services from a Children's Aid after investigation. With an increased focus on working with families earlier, in the vast majority of cases children were able to remain at home while Children's Aid Societies worked with families to strengthen their parenting capacity and create a more stable future for their children.

Since his first day as a child receiving support, Dave* has had confidence and trust in his Children's Aid. "It doesn't matter what it is, homework, support, or just someone to talk to no matter what time of day."

Children's Aid has provided Dave* with the security and resources to achieve success now and in the future. "I now have two part time jobs, one working at my Children's Aid. I am in grade 11 and taking all university stream courses." Children's Aid is more than a support system for Dave, "My Children's Aid is my family".

Cassandra*, a Crown Ward for 17 years, was four when her and her brother were brought into the care of Children's Aid. "Never have I felt love like she poured over my brother and I," Cassandra recalls of her

¹ Based on 2013-2014 data

first foster Mother. “Believe me, we weren’t easy children to love at times...but she loved us with all she had for years.”

Cassandra describes her second and final foster family as the family she longed for. “They were given a teenager with a lot of angst, but they carried on and pushed through my walls... When I got married, my foster Dad walked me down the aisle and gave me away. My foster Mom drove three hours to be by my side for the birth of my son.”

Children’s Aid gave Cassandra the love, support and encouragement to achieve her goals. “Blood is only DNA on a piece of paper, family is who’s there when you need them most,” said Cassandra. “CAS has always been there for me.” Cassandra went on to obtain her Personal Support Worker certification and start a family of her own.

The community members, foster families and child welfare workers who assisted Dave and Cassandra in their times of need have impacted their lives in ways that will not be forgotten.

Every Ontarian has a responsibility to protect children from harm and help each child live a life free of fear and violence. The stories of our children and youth are profiled in a storybook, along with other materials, available on the [OACAS website](#). To learn more, visit www.oacas.org, www.useyourvoice.ca, or contact your [local Children’s Aid Society](#).

**Names have been changed to protect identity*

- 30 -

About the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies: Since 1912, OACAS has represented Ontario’s Children’s Aid Societies in Ontario and provided service in the areas of government relations, communications, information management, education and training to advocate for the protection and well-being of children.

For more information:

Tanzeem Parkar, Communications Advisor
(416) 987-9854 or tparkar@oacas.org