



NEWS RELEASE

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Child welfare sector releases recommendations

New report highlights the importance of the right services at the right time, providing for Aboriginal children, and supports for youth in care

TORONTO – The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) released the 2012 Child Welfare Report today presenting recommendations to the government on child welfare priorities. These priorities have come out of in-depth discussion with the child welfare field, community partners, government officials, and families and youth working with Children's Aid.

This year the recommendations focus on ensuring that Children's Aid is able to provide the right service at the right time, asking the government to deliver on the obligation to give Aboriginal authority over the practice of child welfare in Aboriginal communities, raising the age of protection, and helping youth stay at home while they complete their education.

Approximately 90% of the child protection cases served by Children's Aid involve agencies working with children and parents together, keeping children at home where and when it is safe to do so. An essential part of continuing this work involves a timely response and a range of differential and customized supports and services to provide help before problems escalate and become crises. Late interventions mean that children are more likely to come into care, their connections to their families may be damaged, and the province will bear the cost of providing care. Focus needs to be on continuing to support the services that provide the right services at the right time early on.

In addition to asking the government to deliver on their obligation of devolution, OACAS and Children's Aid Societies are recommending that the government endorse culturally appropriate practices for providing care and protection of Aboriginal children, families, and communities, and provide funding to support the creation of new Aboriginal child welfare agencies and to support culturally appropriate programs that encompass the unique experiences of diverse Aboriginal populations.

As of 2012, more than 40% of Aboriginal children in care are still being served by non-Aboriginal Children's Aid Societies, and are isolated from their First Nations. Sarah*, a former youth in care and current Children's Aid client said "having an Aboriginal Children's Aid worker really helps me find more about my heritage. I can relate to her and I feel more comfortable with her. She understands me more." Before having an Aboriginal worker, Sarah had a hard time connecting with child welfare to get the support she needed to provide a safe home for her children. Having someone who understands where she comes from and the importance her heritage plays in her everyday life was the change Sarah needed to keep moving forward.

OACAS and Children's Aid Societies also released recommendations and findings on the need to raise the age of protection from 16 to 18 to bring the province in line with the UN definition of a "child", and

letting Crown wards stay in their foster or group homes past the current age, which often leaves youth trying to live on their own at 16 or 17 before they have finished their high school education.

To read the full report in English and French, click [here](#).

**Name has been changed to protect identity*

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About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: OACAS is the trusted voice in child welfare in Ontario. 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.

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