

November is Adoption Awareness Month – Children's Aid Societies advocate for life-long relationships for children and youth in care, while addressing the myths about public adoption

Toronto – During November the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and Children's Aid Societies (CAS) across Ontario are promoting Adoption Awareness Month to raise awareness about the importance of life-long relationships for children and youth in care.

"We have seen over and over again how finding the right match between a child and family is one of the most beautiful, life-changing events that can happen to a child in care," says Mary Ballantyne, the Chief Executive Officer of OACAS. "But making these matches is very challenging. During Adoption Awareness Month we will educate the public about the unique profile of the children in care for whom adoption has been identified as an option. We will also use the month to highlight the strengths and skills that we are looking for in prospective adoptive families in the hopes that we can prevent disappointment in the application process."

One of the biggest misconceptions that prospective families bring to their adoption search is that they will be easily matched with a child who is under the age of five. "Those days are gone," says Morag Demers, Senior Policy Analyst at OACAS. "Seventy-five percent of Crown Wards in Ontario who have been in care for two years or more are over the age of 14 – and that age range describes the majority of the children for whom we are hoping to find permanent, long-term relationships."

Prospective adoptive families will also find that many of the children who have been identified for adoption are hoping to be adopted with their siblings, and because of new "openness" adoption legislation, plan to maintain connections with their families of origin. Many children in the public adoption system also have complex needs such as behavioural, mental health, and medical issues. Despite these challenges, many families are matched with children in care every year. Last year 870 children were legally adopted through Children's Aid.

Educating the public about adoption also includes raising awareness about the variety of other "permanency options" that are considered when looking for long-term connections for children in care. Children's Aid Societies recognize that there are many paths to lifelong connections and that there is no one right answer for every child. Other permanency options for children in care include living with kin, legal custody, and customary care for Indigenous children. All of these options are explored for a child at the same time as adoption. Last year over four thousand children found permanency through these alternative permanency arrangements.

For more information about Adoption Awareness Month please contact: Brynn Clarke, Media Relations and Issues Management Specialist at (416) 987-3691 or bclarke@oacas.org.

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. <http://www.oacas.org>.