

## **ADOPTION IS AN OPTION**

### ***The most important thing for children is to have a lifelong family***

TORONTO – November is Adoption Awareness Month in Ontario and all over the province, the [Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies](#) (OACAS) and member agencies are encouraging families to consider adoption and other options for children and youth.

The theme of the November Campaign, "Adoption is an Option" speaks to the need to find permanent homes for up to 8,000 children in the permanent care of Children's Aid Societies (CASs).

The Transformation Agenda, introduced in 2006 is having a positive impact as the number of children coming into the care of CASs has declined, and those coming into care are more likely to live in family settings. However, there are still 8,000 children who need permanent homes, and many of these are older children, children with special needs and/or sibling groups who need to stay together.

Since last year, more children and youth have found permanent families through kinship, legal custody and customary care. In 2010-11, there were 971 children adopted and more than 5,000 children found permanent families through legal custody, customary care and kinship options.

The majority of children and youth who need permanent families are in the older age groups, yet they represent a small percentage of those being adopted. Last year children aged 13-18 represented 61% of the 8,000 children needing permanent families, yet only 3.6% of these children were adopted through Ontario's public adoption system.

[Ontario's Children's Aid Societies](#) educate Ontarians about the option of adopting older children and youth, children with special needs and siblings through this campaign and other activities. Children's Aid Societies work with potential parents to find the right match for children and youth who need lifelong families.

Fairon and Tracey, who adopted two older children, shared "When our worker told us that she had two siblings, ages 8 and 11, who might be a match for us, we said 'show us our children.' It takes time, patience and work to build a family. But we knew that when we decided to adopt."

People who are open to parenting special needs children, sibling groups or older children are also encouraged to consider adoption. "For us, adoption has always been a natural process for creating a family. First of all, we're not infant people. Older kids are awesome, especially once they hit an age where they have distinct personalities," said Elizabeth, adopted mother of an older child with special needs.

[New legislation](#) proclaimed this summer will make it easier for children and youth to find permanent families. [The Building Families and Supporting Youth To Be Successful Act, 2011](#) removes barriers so that more kids in the care of Ontario's Children's Aid Societies can be adopted.

For more information on adoption contact your local Children's Aid Society or visit [www.useyourvoice.ca](http://www.useyourvoice.ca)



When children come into the care of a Children's Aid Society, planning begins immediately for the child to have a permanent family. Work is done to support a family to prevent a child from coming into care or to reunite a family. When a child cannot return to their biological family other options are explored such as finding kin or extended family; customary care in that child's Aboriginal community; legal custody with that child's extended family, community member or foster parents; foster care and adoption.

By the Numbers - Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS):

- there are currently over 8,000 children in the permanent care of CASs in Ontario
- there were 971 adoptions finalized in 2010-11
- there were 1,543 approved adoptions homes available on March 31, 2011
- children and youth found permanent families through other options:
  - 982 children placed in kin care
  - 2,716 children placed in kin service (family service)
  - 590 children placed through legal custody
  - 711 children through customary care.

**Permanency Planning:** provides a broad range of options to achieve a permanent placement for a child that will ensure his or her safety, stability and attachments.

Options for permanent placement include:

**Admission prevention:** the initial focus of child welfare work is on ensuring child safety while maintaining the child in the family home whenever possible. Child welfare agencies and social workers provide support to families to prevent the child from coming into care initially; if a child does come into care, agencies continue to provide support so that the family, if possible, can be re-united.

**Kinship care:** the child is identified as needing protection and has gone to live with kin (often extended family). Children's Aid's role is to ensure that the child continues to be safe, and therefore prevents formal admission into care.

**Kinship care:** the child is identified as needing protection and has been formally placed with kin and that family is approved as a foster home.

**Customary care:** full-time care, nurturing and protection by a caregiver identified by the child's Aboriginal community. Caregivers can include relatives, Aboriginal community members, or adults with whom the child has a bond.

**Legal custody:** an option to provide legal guardianship of a child to a parent, extended family member, community member or resource parents. By providing legal subsidies and supports, this option is designed to address the special challenges for families who make a permanent commitment to caring for a child.

**Foster care:** when there are no safe family alternatives or kin families available to care for the child, Children's Aid will search for a foster family to provide a nurturing and caring home.

**Adoption:** when it is not possible to find a safe and committed home with a relative, family or community member, agencies seek a permanent home for a child through adoption. In some situations, foster parents may become the legal guardians of a child who has been placed in their home, if this plan is in the best interest of the child.

Since 1912, OACAS has represented 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. We are the voice of child welfare in Ontario.

For Backgrounder – [www.oacas.org](http://www.oacas.org)

For more information:

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