

For Immediate Release
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Ontarians speak up on the well-being of children

The 2011 Child Welfare Report focuses on protecting youth, providing for Aboriginal children and finding permanent homes for children in care

TORONTO –The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) released the 2011 Child Welfare Report ([*Children's Well-Being: The Ontarian Perspective*](#)) today highlighting results of a survey conducted in March with 1,002 respondents aged 36 and over. The results show that Ontarians feel strongly about protecting children of all ages from abuse and neglect, helping find permanent families for children, providing better lives for Aboriginal children, and providing better education opportunities for children in care.

Survey respondents flagged the “age of protection” as a top priority for child welfare agencies. Currently, Children's Aid Societies (CASs) are unable to protect children 16 or older even if there are concerns for the safety of youth. Only 7% of the survey respondents feel that it is adequate to protect children only until the age of 16, whereas 49% of respondents said that the age of protection should be 18, 12% said the age of 19 and a further 26% of respondents believe youth should be protected to the age of 21.

Additionally, 76% of respondents believe that there should be supports to families who adopt, provide care by relatives or obtain legal custody of a child through Children's Aid. Even though CASs offer a free, public adoption system to Ontarians, there are still boundaries to finding some children in care a family. Currently, 82% of children in care have diagnosed special needs and while in care receive health, dental, education and treatment supports, which end when they are adopted. This can be a major challenge for families who want to provide a permanent home for a child but are unable to pay for or access the services the child needs.

The survey also highlighted that many Ontarians are not aware of the unique challenges that face Aboriginal children. Child poverty rates are twice as high for Aboriginal children, youth suicide rates are five times higher compared to the average in Canada and there is a disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in the care of the province. Sixty-nine percent of respondents said that additional financial investments should be made to help support Aboriginal children but after being provided the above statistics, 77% of respondents said there should be more financial supports.

An overwhelming 94% of survey respondents stated that they would favour the government making investments to help children in care graduate from high school. Over the last few years, great advancements have been made to help children in care with post-secondary education but only 44% of children in care graduate from high school compared to 81% of their peers. To help children in care take advantage of post-secondary opportunities there needs to be more resources to help them graduate from high school.

Recently, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services tabled *Bill 179, Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011*. If passed, the bill will increase permanency for children and smooth youth in care's transition to adulthood. These are good steps forward to addressing these issues but more needs to be done.

Children's Well-Being: The Ontarian Perspective 2011 Child Welfare Report (read the full report- [English](#) and [French](#)) proposes strategies and recommendations for improving the outcomes of children in Ontario. We all have a role to play in the protection and well-being of Ontario's children. Ontario's future depends on it.

About the survey

From March 24 to March 28, 2011, an online survey was conducted among 1,002 randomly selected Ontarian adults aged 36 years or older who are Angus Reid Forum panellists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the Ontario adult population aged 36 years or older. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies

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.

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