

For Immediate Release
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Youth in need receive boost after 21

Green Shield Canada's Social Surplus Program helps youth transition out of care

TORONTO – The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) is proud to announce the launch of a new and innovative program that supports youth transitioning out of care. The new Crown Ward Aftercare Benefits Program will provide additional help for youth leaving care and living on their own, starting in January.

The Crown Ward Aftercare Benefits Program, funded by Green Shield Canada's Social Surplus Program, can be used by youth who were in the care of a Children's Aid Society and who turn 21 in the next two years. The program offers confidential support around the clock, helping youth with personal and emotional difficulties, career coaching, money management, understanding health and nutrition, legal matters and more, at no cost to the youth. Professionals offer practical, relevant support quickly by phone, in person or online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Participation is completely voluntary.

When youth served by Children's Aid Societies turn 21, they must become fully independent, often before they are ready, and without the support of a caring family. They have many more responsibilities than other young people in Canada – they are expected to manage a household on their own, balance a budget, pay for living expenses, and work a part-time job - often while trying to attend school. Green Shield Canada and OACAS recognized that there is a great need to provide additional supports for youth leaving care and living on their own.

What does this program mean to former youth in care? It means that they have access to a short-term counselling and support service that connects them to a professional who can help. During their time in care, youth are connected to resources such as social workers, community services and programs but when they leave, those supports no longer exist. Youth can feel lost and alone.

“Turning 21 is scary because it means that you no longer have access to the help you need. This program is very important because you can call or connect anytime for advice or answers to tough questions. It's about having support like other youth who live with their families,” said Jade Maitland, YouthCAN coordinator and former youth in care. “A big thank you to Green Shield Canada for funding a much needed program.”

“Green Shield Canada's Social Surplus Program enables access to health and social support services for the most vulnerable members of our communities. It is through initiatives such as the Crown Ward Aftercare Benefits Program that we make a difference in our local communities,” said Steve Bradie, President and Chief Executive Officer, Green Shield Canada. “We are pleased to be a part of this program which offers support to youth as they successfully transition to adulthood.”

OACAS is pleased to partner with Shepell.fgi, who will provide the services to youth.

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.

About Green Shield Canada

Green Shield Canada is Canada's only national not-for-profit health and dental benefits specialist. We seek out innovative ways to improve access to better health for Canadians. From coast-to-coast, our service delivery includes drug, dental, extended health care, vision, hospital and travel benefits.

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