

November 11, 2010

An open letter to Ontarians

All of Ontario's children need families. Ontario's children in the care of Children's Aid Societies (CASs) deserve no less, which is why agencies are working together every day to find them permanent homes.

During November's Adoption Awareness Month, CASs are encouraging individuals or couples to consider becoming parents to the many children who need permanent families. Agencies are especially committed to finding parents who are interested in adopting sibling groups, children with special needs or older children and teens (25% of children available for adoption are older children and teens). In order to find families for sibling groups, children with special needs or older children and teens, agencies search specifically, locally and regionally, for the family that can meet their needs. This is the most effective way to ensure children can find permanent families.

When a child comes into care, CASs pursue an immediate and ongoing plan to find them a permanent family. This may include a number of options, such as reunification with the family, legal custody, kinship care, customary care or adoption. Pursuing multiple options at the same time allows agencies to ensure children can find lasting, loving families more quickly. Last year, over 5,200 children and youth found a permanent home: 3,572 were living with kin; 438 living with legal guardians; 208 placed in customary care homes as per Aboriginal custom; and over 1,000 public adoptions were finalized.

Ontario's agencies work together every day and use supports such as the AdoptOntario database and Adoption Resource Exchanges events in Toronto to help find the best possible families to meet the specific needs of children. Last year alone, the number of public adoptions increased over 21% in Ontario.

Ontario has the lowest number of children in care in Canada, per capita, second only to Prince Edward Island. All of these results demonstrate that more children are finding permanent homes and families.

Ontario has a modern system designed to find customized solutions for children. It is working but more can be done, such as: providing subsidies to adoptive parents who require additional supports; health and dental supports; reducing the waiting list for home studies; a streamlined approach for parents to be able to access the public adoption system, and more public education and recruitment.

Creating permanence for children and youth is critical for Ontario's future. If you are interested in become an adoptive parent to a child in need of a family, call your local Children's Aid Society or visit www.useyourvoice.ca.

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.