

For Immediate Release
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OACAS supports youth advocacy efforts and giving voice to youth in care

TORONTO – Youth in the care of Ontario's Children's Aid Societies (CASs) have been advocating for better services, more supports and more family connections. Their years of advocacy and their recommendations were echoed in the recent report "My Real Life Book" released earlier this week at Queen's Park by the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

"The hearings and the report are an important part of a movement of youth in care advocacy. We agree that "being heard" is critical for youth empowerment and that young people, with the support of adults, can be effective leaders for change in the system." said Adam Diamond, YouthCAN Program Coordinator.

YouthCAN was established at the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) in 2006. It supports youth in care by providing opportunities for thousands of youth to feel empowered through youth conferences, leadership training, advocacy experiences and regional network groups and activities.

"OACAS and Ontario's CAS support the [Youth Leaving Care Hearings Report](#) and congratulate the youth team and the Advocate for their work. Many of the youth who participated in the hearings are part of the OACAS YouthCAN program and we are very proud of their continued advocacy efforts," said Mary Ballantyne, OACAS Executive Director

Over the past six years, YouthCAN has focussed their advocacy efforts on changes to education and financial and emotional supports for youth in CAS care. They also continue to ask government to raise the age for protection of children to 18 and supports for youth to the age of 25.

Youth have acknowledged that some positive changes have occurred, especially related to educational supports, but more is needed to help youth make critical emotional connections and experience a true sense of belonging. While they know change takes time, they agree with the Advocate's Office Youth team – it's time to act.

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 YouthCAN

YouthCAN is a communication, advocacy and networking program for youth in care and run by youth from care, supported by OACAS and CASs. It is dedicated to positively impacting Ontario's child welfare system so that youth in care are empowered, secure and flourish in an environment that is conducive to realizing their full potential.

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