

One Vision One Voice launching Practice Framework to support better outcomes for African Canadian families in Ontario child welfare system

TORONTO – On Thursday, September 29th, One Vision One Voice will launch “Changing the Ontario Child Welfare System to Better Serve African Canadians: Practice Framework”, a tool to guide practice and systemic change within child welfare agencies in Ontario. The launch of the Practice Framework will take place at a one-day Symposium at the Sheraton Toronto Airport Hotel, and will be attended by the Hon. Michael Coteau, Minister of Children and Youth Services and Minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate, Renu Mandhane, Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

Funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services through the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, One Vision One Voice is a true community-led project, the first of its kind in the Ontario child welfare sector. Guided by a Steering Committee of 17 African Canadian community leaders, the project conducted 16 consultations as well as eight feedback sessions in 10 cities, involving over 800 community members, service users, and youth in care. A Reference Group made up of 13 Children's Aid Society staff also provided input toward the final documents.

“The One Vision One Voice project and launch of the Practice Framework is the first step in a long process towards helping our community heal and recover from the systemic dislocations we've experienced through the child welfare system, as evidenced by the over-representation of Black children in care,” says Everton Gordon, Interim CEO of the Jamaican Canadian Association and Executive Director of CAFCAN, and one of project's Steering Committee members. “The community-led process was inclusive, comprehensive, and very significant. It's truly a project from the people, of the people, for the people.”

Part I of the Practice Framework, the Research Report, summarizes the research conducted, including literature and best practice reviews, along with what was heard through the community consultations. It forms the basis for the development of Part II, the Race Equity Practices, which outlines 11 recommended practices that came out of the research. If fully implemented, these recommendations will create a child welfare system that better serves African Canadians in Ontario.

“One Vision One Voice's recommendations will strengthen children's aid societies in Ontario,” says Minister Coteau. “I look forward to continuing to work with the community to ensure children in care receive the best supports to succeed in life.”

The next phase of the One Vision One Voice project will look to support the implementation of the Practice Framework's recommendations. This will involve building sector-capacity for culturally appropriate services and programming, collecting and analyzing the right data so progress can be measured, and ensuring the sustainability of these efforts.

For more information visit www.oacas.org/african Canadians.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: Since 1912, OACAS has represented Ontario's 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.

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