

## Statement on detention of minors

June 27, 2018

In recent weeks, news reports of children being detained and/or separated from their parents in the U.S. has gravely concerned Children's Aid Societies across Ontario. As agencies and individuals who support and care for children, we believe strongly that children should not be subjected to immigration detention. While we know Canada makes best efforts to ensure children are not detained, we acknowledge that the practice still occurs.

Children's Aid Societies work first and foremost with families to strengthen their caregiving capacity so that children and youth can grow up in a safe environment that supports their well-being. In 97% of child welfare investigations, children remained at home. If a child or youth is at risk or living in an unsafe situation, we search for extended family and community members to provide temporary care.

Children and youth held in detention experience distress that affects their physical, mental and emotional functioning. Factors such as the age and vulnerability of a child, the physical/emotional functioning of the child's parent, along with the length of time spent in detention and the suitability of the detention facility, are all factors that can impact a child or youth.

Children's Aid Societies are not routinely advised when children and youth are held in detention, and even though we do not have jurisdiction or oversight over federal immigration facilities, we continue to have conversations with our federal partners around children in detention. We are committed to continuing this work with our partners to determine how these children can best be supported.

Ontario's first Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence, a partnership between Peel CAS and the OACAS was recently launched to provide knowledge, guidance, and services to CASs regarding immigration and citizenship issues facing children and youth in the child welfare system.

We urge the federal government to ensure that children and youth are not detained in Canada and support the use of community based alternatives that keep families together. We stand ready to provide any support or assistance required to ensure the best interests of children and youth across Ontario and Canada.