



## 2021 Dress Purple Day Key Messages

### Dress Purple Day Campaign

- Every October Children's Aid Societies across the province raise awareness about the important role that individuals and communities play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families.
- On Dress Purple Day, Children's Aid Societies collaborate with key partners to speak up for every child and youth's right to safety and well-being in all spaces. Not just physical safety and well-being—children and youth have the right to have their intersectional identity, which includes culture, race, sexual orientation, and gender identity, protected and supported in all spaces.
- On Dress Purple Day, we celebrate the community that cares for families and share the message that help is available and no one is alone.
- On Dress Purple Day, we raise awareness that Children's Aid Societies are community organizations that are part of the circle of care that supports the well-being of children, youth, and families.
- Dress Purple Day offers an opportunity to remind Ontarians that Children's Aid Societies work together with many other social service providers to help children, youth, and families facing challenges.
- Dress Purple Day is an opportunity for Children's Aid Societies to build partnerships with local cross-sector providers and commit to strengthening families through enhanced community-based prevention and early intervention. This aligns with a key pillar of the Ontario Government's child welfare redesign initiative focused on strengthened partnerships and prevention and early intervention.
- Dress Purple Day offers an opportunity to raise awareness among children and youth, including elementary, middle, and high school students, about their right to safety and well-being in all spaces.
- Dress Purple Day offers an opportunity to remind adults about the important role they play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families. This includes every adult's legal duty to call their local Children's Aid Society if they have a concern about the safety or well-being of a child or youth. It also includes the responsibility to check their bias before making a report. Stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, ability, poverty, and sexual orientation can lead to overreporting.
- Provincial classroom prevention resources are available to support teachers to engage in conversations with elementary, middle, and high school students about their safety and well-being in all aspects of their lives and their networks of support. The [Dress Purple Day Provincial Classroom Resources](#) were developed in response to inquest recommendations for age appropriate, child-rights focused child abuse and neglect prevention materials for students.



## **COVID-19 and Dress Purple Day**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional stresses for families, and in some cases has increased risk for the well-being and safety of vulnerable children, youth, and families. Ontarians in need of help are encouraged to reach out to the services available in their community, including Children's Aid Societies, or if they know a young person or family in need of support.
- Dress Purple Day offers an opportunity to remind Ontarians that Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies are open and providing services, and that if they have a concern about the safety or well-being of a child or youth or if their family is in need of support, they should call their local CAS.
- Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Children's Aid Societies have played a critical role in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families. Often, they have been the only service providing in-person care during this especially difficult time. Partnerships across the social services system have proven essential to ensuring that families continue to receive the supports they need to stay healthy and well. Dress Purple Day is an opportunity to showcase those partnerships and innovative approaches to service delivery and to recognize the important work of Children's Aid Societies.

## **The return to in-person learning and Dress Purple Day**

- The return to in-person learning, following a tumultuous 2020-2021 academic year, is likely to pose many challenges for Ontario children and youth.
- Dress Purple Day offers teachers the opportunity to connect with their students and remind them of the ways they can get help if they or someone they know is struggling.
- Because of the realities of this year's return to school, Dress Purple Day is a tool teachers can leverage to support their conversations with children and youth about how they are feeling and what supports they might need to succeed.

## **Equity**

- OACAS acknowledges that the Dress Purple Campaign has had harmful impacts for Indigenous, African Canadian, and other communities that are marginalized. The campaign's historical focus on child abuse prevention encouraged reporting to Children's Aid Societies, which regularly resulted in increased surveillance of these communities by the child welfare system and contributed to the overrepresentation of Indigenous and African Canadian families in the system.
- The overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth is due to the historical injustices perpetrated against First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities by the Canadian government and provincial child welfare systems. These injustices include residential schools and the Sixties Scoop. These colonial legacies have resulted in community impairment, intergenerational trauma, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child welfare.



- The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies acknowledges and apologizes for the harmful role child welfare has played historically, and continues to play, in the lives of Ontario Indigenous children, families, and communities.
- The OACAS acknowledges that there is overrepresentation and an inequity in outcomes for African Canadian families engaged with child welfare agencies. In partnership with the African Canadian community in Ontario and through the development of the One Vision One Voice program, OACAS is taking steps to create a more equitable child welfare system by recognizing the role that systemic racism and colonialism plays in the overrepresentation of African Canadian families in the child welfare system.
- Racism, intolerance, and prejudice are forms of emotional abuse.
- Organizations and systems can also create harm. They can have patterns of behaviour, programs, and policies that don't respect the rights of certain groups of people. Children's Aid Societies have a history of creating harm. Dress Purple Day is an opportunity to demonstrate the ways the child welfare system is working alongside community partners and stakeholders to do better for the communities they serve.