

Children & Youth in Care Day

#ForgetMeNot



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies



CHILDREN'S
AID FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

Toolkit: Children and Youth in Care Day 2023

May 14, 2023

About Children and Youth in Care Day, #ForgetMeNot, and this Toolkit

Children and Youth in Care Day, proclaimed into law with the *Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2014*, is an opportunity to acknowledge the valuable contributions that current and former youth in care make to the province, as well as the strength and resilience shown by these children and youth in the face of adversity.

This year, OACAS is continuing the [#ForgetMeNot campaign](#) by asking all Ontarians the question: **Are you there for kids in care?** This is a way to remind community, government, and service providers that these young people continue to need critical supports. They cannot be forgotten.

This year's campaign emphasizes stories of young people with experience in the system and the influential people in their lives who contributed to their well-being. We want to encourage Ontarians to get involved in supporting their success.

This toolkit is intended to support the participation of various groups, including community stakeholders, community members, government partners, child welfare agencies, and young people themselves in Children and Youth in Care Day 2023 and the #ForgetMeNot campaign. Join us on May 14 by sharing the campaign messages and learning how you can be there for kids in care!



This Toolkit Includes:

- [Goals of Children and Youth in Care Day and #ForgetMeNot 2023](#)
- [Key Messages](#)
- [Our Calls to the Ontario Government](#)
- [How to Be There for Kids in Care](#)
- [Join the Campaign](#)
- [“Forget Me Not” Poem](#)

Goals of Children and Youth in Care Day and #ForgetMeNot 2023

1. To acknowledge children and youth in and from care for their strengths and unique identities.
2. To advocate for better supports for children and youth in care.
3. To build better networks of support by increasing participation of community members and partners so that children and youth in and from care feel supported and thrive.
4. To destigmatize views about children and youth in and from care by increasing awareness and understanding with the public.

Key Messages

Children and Youth in Care Day

- On March 25, 2014, Children and Youth in Care Day was proclaimed by the government of Ontario to raise awareness about children and youth in the care of the province.
- This important day was created because of the tireless efforts of young people in and from care and the stories and experiences they shared through the My Real Life Book report.
- There are approximately 12,000 children and youth in care served by non-Indigenous child welfare agencies in Ontario.
- Children and youth in care are children and youth who live with extended family, friends, or in foster or group homes. They are children and youth who are not able to live with their primary caregivers because of conditions that make it unsafe to do so.



- Children and Youth in Care Day is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of current and former youth in care to the province, as well as reduce stigma and acknowledge their strength and resilience in the face of adversity.
- Children and Youth in Care Day is an important reminder that children and youth in care face many unique challenges. They require allies, advocacy, and collaboration to support them on their life's journey.

#ForgetMeNot

- The #ForgetMeNot campaign aims to bring renewed attention to the accomplishments and challenges of children and youth in the Ontario child welfare system.
- The poor outcomes of youth from child welfare are well documented. Without a sense belonging, support, and strong relationships, youth in and from care continue to be at increased risk of
 - dropping out of high school or post-secondary,
 - substance misuse,
 - human trafficking,
 - being underemployed, homeless, or living in poverty,
 - significant mental health challenges, and
 - involvement in other systems, like criminal justice.
- The unique risks and challenges that youth in and from care face were compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The #ForgetMeNot campaign is about sharing the stories of young people with experience in the system and reminding community, government, and service providers that these young people continue to need critical supports. They cannot be forgotten.
- Supportive adults and strong relationships can help children and youth in care to thrive. This year's campaign highlights the significance of strong networks and meaningful relationships in the lives of children and youth in care as a way to motivate Ontarians to get involved in supporting their success.



- The updated tagline "*Are you there for kids in care?*" aims to encourage community, government, and service providers to think about the ways they can support the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and youth, and their families.
- There are many ways Ontarians can support children and youth in care, including volunteering as a mentor, tutor, or in another capacity, fostering, learning about what it means to be in care, and advocating for the services and supports they need.
- It is important for children and youth in care to know they belong to, and have the support of, their community. They need to know they are not alone. They need to know they are not forgotten.
- Forget-me-nots symbolize love and respect and represent a promise of remembrance. These tiny blooms are known for their resilience and their ability to grow in difficult circumstances and across environments.
- Like the forget-me-not flower, children and youth in care are resilient and adaptable. But despite that strength, they still need consistent care, attention, and tangible support to thrive.

Our Calls to the Ontario Government

Children and youth in care cannot be forgotten. They must be prioritized by the Ontario government as a group with unique lived experiences and distinct needs. It is critical that the province develop policy and programming and make investments that are tailored to their specific needs, including identity and culture. This will ultimately support and further the work being done to address overrepresentation in child welfare and progress being made towards equitable outcomes. OACAS calls on the Ontario government to:

- **Expand mental health services for children and youth in care through additional investments in the *Roadmap to Wellness*.** This additional funding should be provided to organizations focused on child and youth mental health to help reduce wait times and improve access to specialized, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed services and supports. A portion of this funding should be earmarked for children and youth with severe or complex mental health needs.



- **Ensure young people in care have access to safe, appropriate, and secure housing through additional investments in the Homelessness Prevention Program.** Investments should support housing models, programs, and initiatives specifically designed to support youth by offering a holistic range of wraparound supports and services focused on well-being, continued life-skills and social development, employment and education, and connections to culture, identity, and community.
- **Help young people in care successfully enter and thrive in the labour market by making targeted investments focused on learning recovery and skills development.** These targeted investments should be tailored to the needs of youth facing unique barriers to education and employment, such as early leavers from high school, single parent youth, youth living in low-income households, racialized youth, youth experiencing precarious housing, and youth in or from care.

Download our full one-pager for the Ontario government [here](#).

How to Be There for Kids in Care

Like the forget-me-not flower, children and youth in care are resilient and adaptable. But despite that strength, they still need consistent care, attention, and tangible support to thrive. These are just some of the ways you can show up for kids in care in your community.

MENTOR

Kids in care are often missing strong, supportive adult relationships. Consider mentoring through [Big Brothers Big Sisters](#), [StepStones for Youth](#), or through your [local child welfare agency](#).

TUTOR

Kids in care graduate at much lower rates than their peers. Become a tutor for a child or youth in care and help raise their level of educational achievement.

[Contact your local agency](#)



VOLUNTEER

There are lots of other ways to donate your time and talents to benefit children and youth in care, including as a driver, board member, or helping with special events.

[Contact your local agency](#)

FOSTER

Kids across the province need foster caregivers to offer safe homes that support their identities, connections, and well-being. It could be you.

[Learn more](#)

LEARN

Most Ontarians don't know what it means to be a kid in care. Educate yourself so you can better support their needs.

[Learn more](#)

ADVOCATE

Tell your local MPP that you want kids in care to have the supports and services they need to achieve their potential.

[Use our letter template](#)

SHARE

Join us on May 14 to celebrate the achievements and highlight the needs of kids in care. They need our voices.

[Get our social media kit](#)

WORK

There are many opportunities to apply your skills and experiences, no matter what they are, in the child welfare sector.

[Find a job](#)



Join the Campaign

Forget Them Not

The 2023 #ForgetMeNot campaign features the stories of seven inspiring young people and the individuals who have influenced their success and well-being.

Meet Van and Bryan, Samuel and Severn, Aidan and Kevin, Troy and Joycelyn, Byanka and Isabelle, Rose and Jenn, and Kaygan and Elaine and Madil [here](#).

Then share their stories!

Join the #ForgetMeNot conversation!

Spread awareness about Children and Youth in Care Day on social media on May 14.

Follow us at [@ONT_youthCAN](#) and [@our_children](#) on Twitter, [@ont_youthcan](#) on Instagram, and [@ontarioyouthcan.org](#) on Facebook.

Hashtags

#ForgetMeNot

#ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

www.oacas.org/forgetmenot

Social Media Messages

Twitter/Instagram

#ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay was created because of young people's tireless efforts. Let's bring renewed attention to the accomplishments and challenges of children/youth in care. Learn more at oacas.org/forgetmenot #ForgetMeNot

The #ForgetMeNot campaign is about sharing the stories of young people with experience in child welfare and reminding community, government, and service providers that they need critical supports. They cannot be forgotten. We all have a part to play in making sure they thrive. oacas.org/forgetmenot

Are you there for kids in care? Tell us how! Share how you support children and youth in the child welfare system. Learn more about the campaign at oacas.org/forgetmenot
#ForgetMeNot #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

Supportive adults and strong relationships can help children and youth in care to thrive. Visit oacas.org/forgetmenot to hear the stories of 7 incredible former youth in care and the people who supported their well-being. It could be you! #ForgetMeNot
#ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay



Be there for kids in care! There are many ways Ontarians can support kids in care: volunteering as a mentor or tutor, fostering, or advocating for the services and supports they need. Learn more at oacas.org/forgetmenot #ForgetMeNot #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

#ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay was created because of the tireless efforts of young people in/from care. They wanted a day to be recognized for their contributions, strength, and resilience. On May 14 let's make sure they feel supported and know they are not forgotten. #ForgetMeNot

It only takes one person to make children and youth in care feel like they are not alone. On #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay, be that person. Make sure they know they belong to, and have the support of, community. Learn more at oacas.org/forgetmenot. #ForgetMeNot

Children and Youth in Care Day is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of current and former youth in care, as well as reduce stigma and celebrate their strength, bravery, and resilience in the face of adversity. Happy #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay! #ForgetMeNot oacas.org/forgetmenot

Join us on May 14. Share our campaign messages to make sure children and youth in care know that they are not alone, that they belong, and that they have the support of their community. Learn how you can support their success at oacas.org/forgetmenot #ForgetMeNot

Forget-me-nots symbolize love and respect and represent a promise of remembrance. Like the flower, children and youth in care are resilient. But despite that strength, they need consistent care, attention, and tangible support to thrive. #ForgetMeNot oacas.org/forgetmenot

Do you have experience in child welfare in Ontario? Join our #ForgetMeNot campaign! Read our campaign poem on video and share it with us at youthcan@oacas.org. Or tell us your story of beating the odds, blossoming, and who helped you get there. oacas.org/forgetmenot

I'm sharing my #ForgetMeNot story because...

Facebook/LinkedIn

On March 25, 2014, Children and Youth in Care Day was proclaimed by the government of Ontario to raise awareness about children and youth in the care of the province. This important day was created because of the tireless efforts of young people in and from care and the stories and experiences they shared through the My Real Life Book report. On Children and Youth in Care Day we want them to know that they are not alone, they belong, that they have the support of their community. They will not be forgotten. oacas.org/forgetmenot #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay #ForgetMeNot



In honour of Children and Youth in Care Day 2023, OACAS is launching a second phase of the #ForgetMeNot campaign to share stories of young people with experience in the system and the influential people in their lives who contributed to their well-being. We are highlighting the significance of strong networks and meaningful relationships in the lives of children and youth in care to encourage Ontarians to get involved in supporting their success. We are asking the question: **Are you there for kids in care?** as a way to remind community, government, and service providers that these young people continue to need critical supports. They cannot be forgotten. Learn more, including how you can participate, at oacas.org/forgetmenot. #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

Supportive adults and strong relationships can help children and youth in care to thrive. This year's campaign highlights the significance of strong networks and meaningful relationships in the lives of children and youth in care as a way to motivate Ontarians to get involved in supporting their success. Visit oacas.org/forgetmenot to hear the stories of seven incredible former youth in care and the people who helped them get where they are today. It could be you! #ForgetMeNot #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

Be there for kids in care! There are many ways Ontarians can support children and youth in care, including volunteering as a mentor, tutor, or in another capacity, fostering, or advocating for the services and supports they need. Learn more about the ways you can support the safety, success, and well-being of children and youth in Ontario's child welfare system at oacas.org/forgetmenot. #ForgetMeNot #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

Children and Youth in Care Day is an important reminder that children and youth in care face many unique challenges. They require allies, advocacy, and collaboration to help them reach their full potential. Children and youth in care need to know they are not alone. They need to know they are not forgotten. Join us on May 14, 2023 and amplify the voices of children and youth in care and discover ways you can support their safety, well-being, and success. oacas.org/forgetmenot #ForgetMeNot #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

Campaign Assets

The visual elements of the campaign include photographs and stories of former youth in care and the adults who supported their well-being, a video reading of the "Forget Me Not" poem, and more.

- Watch and share the video [here](#)
- View and download all seven campaign stories at www.oacas.org/forgetmenot
- Download the banners [here](#)
- Download the poem [here \(8 x 11\)](#) and [here \(11 x 17\)](#)

All campaign materials are available at www.oacas.org/forgetmenot.



Forget Me Not

Forget-me-nots symbolize love and respect and represent a promise of remembrance. These tiny blooms are known for their resilience and their ability to grow in difficult circumstances and across environments. This poem was written by former kid in care, David Lewis-Peart.

I've grown through some tough things,

No doubt,

Survived in spite of

Thrived and made light of heavy,

Lifted through concrete and kept steady going.

Paving my own way.

Laid roots. Bloomed.

Put feet to ground and planted in impossible odds.

But I didn't get there alone.

I was first shown that odds were meant to be beat.

I was believed in, poured into, and encouraged on by those who didn't count me out.

Those that took me in.

Those that took their time.

People who gave me space to define what blossoming meant for me.

Who reminded that success isn't determined by history, but by a commitment to not forgetting.

It's no mystery, the flowers that grow are the ones you remember to water.

Forget. Me. Not.