



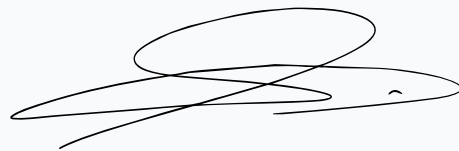
Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

OACAS Annual Report

# VALUE FOR MEMBERS

2024 - 2025

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**Solomon Owoo**  
CEO, OACAS



**Vera Mercier**  
Chair, OACAS Board of Directors

In 2024–2025, OACAS advanced its mission to transform Ontario’s child welfare system through strategic advocacy, strong sector collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to equity, efficiency, youth engagement, and systemic improvement. Central to our work was delivering clear value for our members—through cost-saving innovations, responsive tools and resources, and collective action that strengthened the sector’s voice and impact.

This year, OACAS pursued a bold advocacy agenda that combined policy reform, public engagement, and behind-the-scenes strategic influence. We have deepened our influence in key areas including amplifying youth voices, supporting member agencies, driving systemic improvement, and embedding culturally affirming and equity-focused practices into all areas of our work. OACAS held over 30 strategic engagements with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), participated in more than 50 external partnership meetings, and led targeted advocacy through public campaigns, an open letter to the Premier, and policy submissions. These efforts addressed critical sector challenges—including the urgent need for foster caregivers, better support services for children with complex needs, and a continuous push for better funding of the sector to ensure its sustainability. Through our One Vision One Voice (OVOV) and Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) initiatives, we advanced equity by continuing to work alongside our Black and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Youth-centered programming expanded with the launch of the 2SLGBTQ+ Youth Council and continued investment in leadership development opportunities such as the African Canadian Leadership Mentorship Program (ACLMP). More than 80 youth attended our flagship gathering - YouthCAN conference and 248 registrants attended our PowerUP! Youth Symposium. 38 youth also attended the Camp Lifting Leaves, a camp for children and youth from 2SLGBTQ+ communities who are involved in the child welfare system can come together to connect with peers.

OACAS also reinforced its role as a sector convenor and knowledge keeper. We hosted 32 provincial networks with over 1000 unique members, delivered 28 webinars some of which had up to 1000 attendees, hosted 14 in-person gatherings, and issued over 250 communications through the 2024-2025 year.

OACAS also made meaningful strides in advancing Truth and Reconciliation. We supported Indigenous-led transitions in service delivery, deepened partnership and relationships with Indigenous organizations such as Chiefs of Ontario, Assembly of First Nations, Métis Nation of Ontario, Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, and elevated the practice of Indigegogy as a framework for culturally grounded care. OACAS continued to lead this work to ensure child welfare services reflect the self-determined priorities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

In delivering value for our members, we prioritized fiscal responsibility and shared innovation as a key focus of our work. With a 4.8% reduction in benefit insurance premiums(\$1.5M savings), the expansions of shared purchasing services (\$8M in lifetime cost avoidance), as well as providing a membership fee rebate of approximately \$0.8M (22% savings), OACAS delivered significant cost savings for our members. Enhancements to the Aftercare Benefits Initiative and distribution of Clark Bursaries also provided tangible support to youth transitioning from care. The launch of the new myOACAS Learning Portal brought improved digital training to nearly 14,000 learners, including 5,500 caregivers.

A major milestone in September 2024 was the appointment of Solomon Owoo as our new Chief Executive Officer. His leadership and vision marked a new chapter for the Association. With a greater focus on strategic partnerships, collaboration and member support, Solomon is advancing our work with members, government and communities.

Looking ahead, OACAS will continue to prioritize our deep commitment to advocacy, collaboration, equity, and system improvement. Together with our members, government partners, and communities, we can build a future where every child and youth thrives.

# ADVOCATING FOR CHILD WELFARE TRANSFORMATION / IMPROVEMENT



In child welfare, advocacy means holding systems accountable while offering a vision of what’s possible: safe, culturally affirming, and supportive environments for all children and families.

14

engagements with MCCSS to seek feedback on specific policies over the year

5

legislative submissions (Bill 188, Pre-Budget Submission, Adoption Placement Settings, Ready, Set, Go, and Customary Care)

31

strategic meetings with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)

7

meetings with Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs)

Last year, OACAS ran **5 Campaigns**. These campaigns involve: meeting with community organizations and leaders, including MPPs, generating statements and social media posts, delivering promotional materials, and connecting with the sector. The ‘There to Care’ Campaign was also introduced last year.

Dress Purple Day involved meeting with **6 different organizations** consisting of a total of **30 individuals**, a trip to Queen’s Park, meetings with **4 MPPs**, generating an **open letter** to the Premier of Ontario, a toolkit for members to support the Dress Purple Campaign within their local agencies, and one tip sheet for community partners to support the open letter. Generating the open letter involved reaching out to **40 different organizations** which resulted in **28 distinct organizations** across the province lending their support to the open letter.

54

meetings with more than **35 external collaborating organizations**, including post-secondary institutions, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, governmental bodies, and community organizations

11

media statements

2

interviews with media outlets (TVO and Toronto Star).

17

briefing and issue notes

48

social media posts resulting in website traffic increasing by **25%** reaching **10,000+** individuals/organizations

The Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) initiative launched recruitment for a 2SLGBTQ+ Youth Council to ensure the voices of queer youth are being centered in the work that is addressing disproportionality and disparities in service for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Ontario’s child welfare system. They also partnered with the Ten Oaks Project to host another edition of Camp Lifting Leaves, a camp for children and youth from 2SLGBTQ+ communities who are involved with the child welfare system. **38 youth** from **15 agencies** attended.

# COLLABORATING TO TRANSFORM CHILD WELFARE



Over the last year, OACAS hosted **14 in-person gatherings**, including the YouthCAN Conference (**80 youth participants**), PowerUP! Youth Symposium (**248 registrants**), 10th Anniversary of Children and Youth in Care Day (**64 registrants**), and the Child Welfare Leadership Meeting (**90 registrants**).

This year, by **onboarding 28 new youth** to its committees and advisory councils, OACAS is creating a culture of collaboration that embeds youth voices into our work.

Hosted **32 different** provincial networking groups with **1157 unique members**, with most meeting quarterly

OACAS has supported member agencies in transitioning services for Indigenous children, families, and youth to Nations asserting sovereignty, jurisdiction, and their chosen expression of nationhood. We remain actively engaged in advancing our Reconciliation commitments through meaningful action and sustained relationship-building with Chiefs of Ontario, Assembly of First Nations, Métis Nation of Ontario, Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. Indigegogy provides a framework for reimagining child welfare as a system that truly supports the well-being of Indigenous children, families, and communities, fostering healing, resilience, and empowerment.

OACAS hosted **28 Webinars**, some with nearly **1,000 attendees**, such as the Safety and Well-Being of Children and Youth in Out-Of-Home Care Webinar.

OACAS has released various statements, a resource guide with **125 unique resources**, met with the Hon. Michael Parsa, and MCCSS representatives, hosted meetings with Child Welfare Sector Leadership on this concern, and included this pressing need into the OACAS Pre-Budget submission.

Last year, the One Vision One Voice (OVOV) team coordinated the African Canadian Leadership Mentorship Program (ACLMP); **facilitated 5** Anti-Black racism trainings, equity workshops, and knowledge sessions.

41

issues of  
the Weekly Briefing

201

issues of  
“In the News”

12

issues of  
“Let’s Talk Learning”

14

Hansard Highlights

# IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS





In 2024-25, OACAS engaged in several initiatives designed to reduce child welfare costs and ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

For example, the Benefits Consortium Steering Committee (BCSC) secured a **1-year guarantee** for an overall **4.8% reduction** in group purchased insurance premiums, representing **\$1.5 million in savings**. There was also a cost avoidance of over **\$8 million** lifetime savings with Shared Services Group Purchasing Contract Management services.

Last year, OACAS also updated the Aftercare Benefits Initiative (ABI) registration process to improve registration efficiency and easier access to the health and dental benefits program for former youth in care.

OACAS has provided a membership fee rebate in the amount of **\$818,970** which represents a net **savings of 22%** in fees to members.

OACAS continues to support agencies in navigating policy and legislative changes. Last year, Bill 188, the *Supporting Children's Futures Act (2024)*, was passed amending the CYFSA and its regulations (O. Reg. 155/18 and O. Reg. 156/18) to better ensure the safety and quality of services for children in out-of-home care.

OACAS hosted **10 working group meetings**, attended **4 meetings with MCCSS**, attended **1 meeting with MPP Monique Taylor** (Critic, Children, Community and Social Services) wrote **5 briefing notes**, and made **3 submissions to MCCSS**.

OACAS administered the Clark Bursaries for youth aged 18-25 attending post-secondary school or returning to complete high school as adults - **223 youth were awarded \$437,500 in Clark Bursaries**.

The Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) team also delivered **5 webinars** that outlined related changes to CPIN to support compliance with new legislation and regulations. This team delivers the following system-level data analysis and trends reporting to members: high-cost care and unlicensed placements; HR trends; Reconciliation Commitments; finance requests and budget roll ups; Ready, Set, Go; Ministry quarterly reports. Last year, the CPIN Team **developed 15 resources** for the sector to align with recent legislative and regulatory changes for children in care, out-of-home care, and adoption.

OACAS released a tool kit for members, covering the **9 focus areas of the Third Party Review** and **17 Frequently Asked Questions**. The kit also contained **12 best practices for engaging with media** and **8 tips on handling media requests**.

**Last Year: 10 Tool Kits Distributed**

- There to Care Foster Care Recruitment Campaign Tools
  - Police Record Check Tools
  - 2025 Provincial Election Advocacy Toolkit
  - Aftercare Benefit Initiative Tools
  - Equitable Recruitment and Selection Toolkit
- Audit Preparation Tool Kit
  - Pre-Budget Submission Toolkit
  - Member Advocacy Toolkit
  - Dress Purple Day Toolkit
  - Children Youth in Care Day Toolkit



# TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



OACAS launched the new “myOACAS Learning Portal” and an upgraded “myOACAS Learning Support Centre.” By the end of 2024-25 almost **1,500** additional user accounts had been created, and more than **5,000** unique users had accessed courses.

**120+** courses manually recreated for the new myOACAS Learning Portal

**130+** courses available to **52** child welfare agencies  
**102** private caregiver organizations and others

**31,911** enrollments from **13,671** individuals including **5,535** caregivers of which **40%** are affiliated with private caregiver organizations.

**7** new courses and updated **30+** courses (English and French)

- New courses included:**
- Kujali: Caring for Black Children - Training for Foster Caregivers (English/French)
  - QSF: Overview of the Regulatory Amendments Effective Jan 1, 2025; (English/French)
  - A Deeper Dive: Skills Practice and Coaching in Navigating Challenging Conversations about Race, Culture, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity in Workshop Facilitation (English only)

**280+** in-class sessions

**59** library guides (**2 new and 8 updated**) viewed more than **100,000** times; Library guides provide key information, make recommendations for further reading and suggest multimedia learning content of interest to the Ontario child welfare sector

**237** times, facilitators participated in professional development courses

The new myOACAS Learning Support Centre features a knowledge base with over **40** updated and new resources to assist with training and learning activities.

**300+** facilitators supported and **35** new ones onboarded

Course evaluations continue to be positive with **95%** of learners indicating that courses were high quality, relevant, and improved their understanding. **98%** indicated that they would apply their learning to their practice or the care they provide.



## OACAS BOARD MEMBERS 2024-2025

**Vera Mercier**  
Chair / Agency Board Director  
Durham Children's Aid Society

**Ela Smith**  
Past Chair

**Derrick Drouillard**  
Treasurer / Agency Staff Director  
Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society

**Pierre Morin**  
Agency Board Director  
Children's Aid Society of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry

**Bill Penny**  
Agency Board Director  
Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex

**Catherine Simunovic**  
Agency Board Director  
North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services

**Dannielle Samuel**  
Agency Board Director  
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

**Priscilla Manful**  
Agency Staff Director  
Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto

**Amanda Colacicco**  
Agency Staff Director  
Family and Children's Services of Frontenac Lennox and  
Addington

**Cléo Charlebois**  
Agency Staff Director  
North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services

**Tracy Willoughby**  
Agency Staff Director  
Children's Aid Society Of Algoma

**Sally Johnson**  
Agency Staff Director  
Child and Family Services of Grand Erie

**Patricia Codner**  
Associate Member

OACAS  
BALANCE SHEET

March 31, 2025,  
with comparative information for 2024

			2025	2024
	Operating Fund	Special Bursary Fund	Total	Total
<b>Assets</b>				
<b>Current assets</b>				
Cash	\$ 3,296,139	\$ 41,250	\$ 3,337,389	\$ 6,386,050
Short-term investments	1,000,000	–	1,000,000	–
Accounts receivable	996,221	–	996,221	1,202,466
Prepaid deposits and expenses	348,101	–	348,101	220,097
Interfund receivable (payable)	(105,452)	105,452	–	–
	5,535,009	146,702	5,681,711	7,808,613
Capital assets (note 2)	3,800,008	–	3,800,008	3,983,111
	\$ 9,335,017	\$ 146,702	\$ 9,481,719	\$ 11,791,724
<b>Liabilities and Fund Balances</b>				
<b>Current liabilities:</b>				
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 1,611,058	\$ –	\$ 1,611,058	\$ 2,365,563
Deferred revenue (note 3)	1,503,616	41,250	1,544,866	3,404,706
	3,114,674	41,250	3,155,924	5,770,269
<b>Fund balances:</b>				
Invested in capital assets	\$ 3,800,008	\$ –	\$ 3,800,008	\$ 3,983,111
Special bursary fund	–	105,452	105,452	115,985
Operating fund	2,420,335	–	2,420,335	1,922,359
	6,220,343	105,452	6,325,795	6,021,455
	\$ 9,335,017	\$ 146,702	\$ 9,481,719	\$ 11,791,724

OACAS

STATEMENT OF REVENUE  
AND EXPENSES

Year ended March 31, 2025,  
with comparative information for 2024

	Operating Fund		Special Bursary Fund		Total	
	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
<b>Revenue</b>						
Government of Ontario	\$ 7,362,843	\$ 6,939,932	\$ –	\$ –	\$ 7,362,483	\$ 6,939,932
Membership services	3,160,754	3,253,199	–	–	3,160,754	3,253,199
Other revenue	604,631	714,567	5,073	6,904	609,704	721,471
Sales and registration fees	–	5,198	439,206	349,348	439,206	354,546
Donations	315,878	261,075	–	–	315,878	261,075
	11,444,106	11,173,971	444,279	356,252	11,888,385	11,530,223
<b>Expenses</b>						
Salaries	5,266,151	5,472,793	27,844	19,598	5,293,995	5,492,391
Contracted professional services	1,775,299	1,599,415	-	–	1,775,299	1,599,415
Employee benefits	1,360,989	1,396,085	6,664	4,206	1,367,653	1,400,291
Direct contract	1,333,579	1,094,024	–	–	1,333,579	1,094,024
Office and administration	694,261	537,634	5,271	6,198	699,532	543,832
Facilities and equipment	392,325	406,233	–	–	392,325	406,233
Bursaries and grants	30,000	42,000	404,500	326,250	434,500	368,250
Amortization of capital assets	193,945	202,297	–	–	193,945	202,297
Other	48,037	68,303	–	–	48,037	68,303
Loan interest	–	39,341	–	–	–	39,341
Business travel and hospitality	31,233	37,351	–	–	31,233	37,351
Training development and recruitment	13,947	24,902	–	–	13,947	24,902
	11,139,766	10,920,378	444,279	356,252	11,584,045	11,276,630
<b>Excess of revenue over expenses</b>	\$ 304,340	\$ 253,593	\$ –	\$ –	\$ 304,340	\$ 253,593



Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

