

October is Child Abuse Prevention Month Protecting children is a community responsibility

TORONTO – More than 47% of adult Ontarians have been exposed to or know someone who is the victim of child abuse and neglect. This is one of the many reasons Ontario's Children's Aid Societies continue to educate the public about their community responsibility to protect children.

In October, the [Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies](#) (OACAS) and Ontario's Children's Aid Societies (CASs) across the province promote Child Abuse Prevention Month through public service announcements, media relations, local events and initiatives. The Child Abuse Prevention campaign aims to educate the public about the prevention of abuse, supports available to families and everyone's responsibility to protect children and youth. Every Ontarian has the opportunity to make a difference in a child's life by learning the signs and being vigilant for markers of abuse and neglect, and by contacting their local Children's Aid Society if ever there is a concern that a child is at risk of harm or their family needs help.

According to Mary Ballantyne, Executive Director of OACAS, "Everyone concerned about the safety and well-being of children and youth should be aware of the risk factors for abuse and neglect and ways to prevent situations from escalating that put children at risk. Knowing who to call for help and making the call to your local Children's Aid Society to provide services and supports to a family in need or care for a child at risk of abuse or neglect is critical to ensuring children are safe and well cared for."

This year, the OACAS partnered with the [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#) to educate the public and concerned parents and caregivers about protecting children from sexual abuse and online exploitation. Thanks to funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Canadian Centre has developed ***The Teatree Tells Interviewer's Resource Kit*** as a new tool to assist workers in interviewing child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, and will be distributing it free-of-charge to CASs across Ontario later this month. Parents can also visit teatreetells.ca to download a free copy of the Teatree Tells Parent Guide and other important resources.

"The issue of child sexual abuse is not an easy subject to talk about for families and communities, and as a result the topic does not get the attention it warrants except in situations where a professional trained in this area is involved. As adults, we all have a responsibility to learn about this issue so we can protect children from being sexually abused," said Noni Classen, Director of Education at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. "We are so pleased to partner with the OACAS to get these important materials into the hands Ontario's child welfare professionals."

Also this year, OACAS partnered with local visual and text-based artists to create a public art installation, "[Our Hope for Children](#)", that debuted at Toronto's [Scotiabank Nuit Blanche](#) event on October 1. The art exhibit fused diverse portraits and words to illustrate a community's hopes and dreams for children and also encourages both participants and viewers to share in the responsibility of keeping children safe.

Everyone in Ontario can help protect children in their community. Learn more, visit www.useyourvoice.ca, www.oacas.org/hope, www.teatreetells.ca or contact your local Children's Aid Society.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: OACAS is a membership organization representing CASs in Ontario. The Association has served its members, the community, the public and the government in a variety of ways since 1912. Today, OACAS provides service in the areas of advocacy, public education, youth in care, information management, education and training, and member outreach. OACAS is the voice of child welfare in Ontario.

For more information:

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