

ONE VISION ONE VOICE

CHANGING THE ONTARIO CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM
TO BETTER SERVE AFRICAN CANADIANS

Purpose

In 2015, the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services funded the African Canadian community, through the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, to facilitate the development of a Practice Framework that would support child welfare agencies in providing better service to African Canadian children, youth and families.

Project Rationale

For decades, African Canadians, advocates, service users, community partners, and most recently the media have raised the issue of overrepresentation of African Canadian children and youth in Ontario's child welfare system. While the data to quantify the extent of racial disproportionality have not been collected on a provincial level, the limited data that are available, the personal experiences of service users, as well as observations by service providers, advocates, family courts, and group home staff confirm that there is an overrepresentation of African Canadians in Ontario's child welfare system.

Literature
Review



Best
Practice
Research



Community Recommendations for Change

Changes to Ontario's child welfare system:

1. Change the funding formula.
2. Create an African Canadian Children's Aid Society.
3. Mandate collection and reporting of disaggregated race-based data.
4. Increase oversight and accountability.
5. Change curriculum of the schools of Social Work.
6. Increase funding for relevant African Canadian community agencies.
7. Establish Disproportionality and Disparity Office.
8. Develop a "Bill of Rights" for parents and children.
9. Establish an African Canadian Advisory Committee.
10. Review Ministry guidelines and standards through a race equity lens.

Changes within child welfare agencies:

11. Ensure family-centred approach to child welfare.
12. Increase use of kinship placements.
13. Increase cultural matching of foster and adoptive families with children and youth in care.
14. Keep children and youth in their communities.
15. Support White foster and adoptive parents.
16. Ensure appropriate financial supports for African Canadian children and youth.
17. Ensure African Canadian children and families have access to culturally appropriate services.
18. Improve education and training of child welfare staff.
19. Engage and partner with the African Canadian community.
20. Develop and implement an Employment Equity Program within CASs.
21. Educate mandated referrers.

African Canadian Community:

22. Coordinate community services.
23. Educate African Canadian parents about child welfare.



Recommendations from the Steering Committee

The Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services:

1. Amend the Child and Family Services Act to acknowledge the historical significance of African Canadians and Canada's history of anti-Black racism, and to establish need for equitable outcomes.
2. Establish African Canadian Child and Family Services agencies.
3. Develop protocols between CAS and African Canadian Child and Family Services agencies.
4. Establish Disproportionality and Disparity Unit that leads and directs OACAS and member agencies.
5. Establish mandatory requirements for the collection and annual reporting of disaggregated race-based data by child welfare agencies to be used for strategic planning, program development, and service delivery.
6. Review updated Child Protection Standards through an anti-Black racism lens and integrate Practice Framework.
7. Conduct Ministry and OACAS-funded initiatives through an anti-Black racism lens.
8. Allocate human and financial resources to support Practice Framework.

The Province of Ontario:

9. Establish a systems-wide anti-Black racism training initiative through the Anti-Racism Directorate.
10. Establish body to oversee inter-sectoral efforts to address disproportionality and disparities in child welfare.
11. Review complaint mechanisms for child welfare and put in place oversight mechanisms to ensure investigation into complaints of racial discrimination.
12. Establish fund for culturally responsive services for African Canadian families.
13. Provide oversight of the child welfare system similar to the oversight of other sectors.

Federal, provincial, and regional/municipal governments:

14. Increase funding for services that address basic needs of vulnerable families.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies:

15. Establish an African Canadian Advisory Committee.
16. Update the OACAS-designed new worker training to include the history, experiences, and voices of African Canadians.
17. Establish OACAS team to lead the elimination of disproportionality and disparity in partnership with the African Canadian community.
18. Develop training with African Canadian Advisory Committee to support OACAS staff to lead the field in addressing racial disproportionality and disparities.



Race Equity Practices

The 11 Race Equity Practices promote that organizational change occurs throughout child welfare agencies through a race equity lens.

Part A: Setting the Organizational Context

- Practice 1 Commitment to courageous leadership
- Practice 2 Collect and analyze data to measure racial disproportionality and disparities
- Practice 3 Evaluate programs and monitor performances
- Practice 4 Allocate appropriate and dedicated resources
- Practice 5 Engage African Canadian parents and communities
- Practice 6 Engage and educate mandated referrers
- Practice 7 Establish effective internal complaint mechanisms
- Practice 8 Enhance human resource management

Part B: Direct Service Practices

- Practice 9 Provide daily supervision, ongoing training, and supports for staff, volunteers and caregivers
- Practice 10 Establish collaborations and partnerships
- Practice 11 Strengthen the ability of caregivers to support African Canadian children and youth

Learn More

For more information on One Vision One Voice, please visit <http://www.oacas.org/africancanadians>



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies
The voice of child welfare in Ontario

