



For Immediate Release
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Children's Aid Societies and schools across the province DRESS PURPLE on October 24 to speak up for every child and youth's right to safety and well-being

Toronto – On Wednesday October 24, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), Children's Aid Societies (CAS), boards of education, schools, and EarlyOn and child care centres across the province will participate in Ontario Dress Purple Day. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness about every child and youth's right to safety and well-being and to celebrate the community that cares for kids. The provincial hashtag for the campaign is #IBREAKthesilence.

This is the second year that hundreds of schools across the province will participate in the campaign to remind students that help is available and no one is alone. Teachers and education professionals will be using specialized classroom resources to engage in age appropriate conversations about child abuse and neglect with the goal of supporting students to acquire skills to reduce their vulnerability to harm. The classroom resources have been developed for the OACAS by Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre and Windsor CAS, both organizations that have decades of experience teaching prevention in classrooms.

The Dress Purple classroom resources, which are built around the theme "It takes a community to care for kids", focus on helping students to identify networks of support. Classroom resources for high schools include a focus on self-esteem, consent, healthy and unhealthy relationships, and reasons to ask for help. Evidence shows that teaching students about networks of support, consent, and self-esteem offer important prevention tools for children and youth. The resources for middle and high-school students coincide with the newly raised age of protection, which now includes 16 and 17-year-olds. The classroom resources can be found on the OACAS website at <http://www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday/>.

"Schools have a unique window into the lives of children and youth, and so play an important role in supporting their safety and well-being," says Mary Ballantyne, CEO of the OACAS. "For many children and youth, schools are the one place where they may encounter helping adults who can support them to address any challenges they are facing."

Ontario's 49 CASs are an essential part of the provincial safety net for children, but they rely heavily on professional and public referrals to do their work. Schools are one of the leading sources for child protection referrals made to CASs.

Media contact:

To learn more about the Ontario Dress Purple Day campaign, the new age of protection, and how Children's Aid Societies support children, youth and families please contact Sean McGrady, smcgrady@oacas.org, 416-644-2497

To acknowledge Ontario Dress Purple Day, the CN Tower will be lit purple at the bottom half of every hour from dawn to dusk on October 24.